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Miss SIDNEY BIDULPH,

As prepared for the Press

By the LATE EDITOR of the
FORMER PART.

Mrs. Frances C. Sheridan

VOLUME IV.

OLD BARN
J. S. DODSLEY, 1768

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INTRODUCTION
TO THE
CONTINUATION
OF THE
MEMOIRS
OF
MISS SIDNEY BIDULPH.

THE editor of the former part of these memoirs having been extremely solicited by many people, to procure, if possible, a further account of Mrs. Arnold and her family, would gladly have gratified the curiosity of his readers, if after having left so melancholy an impression on the minds of the tender and humane, he could, in the succeeding part of the history, have thrown in some rays of sunshine, to brighten the prospect, before he dropt the

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curtain over so gloomy a scene; but as that satisfaction is not permitted him, the only reflection that could enable him to pursue with any alacrity the thread of this affecting story, was, that the principal person concerned in it, is long since at peace, and in possession of the rewards which were denied to her virtue and her sufferings here.

The gentleman by whose means I was favoured with the first part of this history, told me upon my re-urging my enquiries after some farther lights into it, that as all the events which occurred even after the close of his mother's narrative had happened when he was in his early infancy, he could give me very little information about them: he only knew in general that some very distressful incidents had succeeded in Mrs. Arnold's life after that period: he added that his mother never cared to speak on the subject, which had prevented his asking her any particulars; but that he recollected to have heard her say, that she believed Patty Main, the young woman who formerly waited on Mrs. Arnold, was in possession
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of some papers which contained the whole story. I asked him if this gentlewoman were still living, and where she was to be found; he told me she had married a gentleman of the name of Askham, who had an estate in Oxfordshire; but whether she, or any of her family, were now in being he could not inform me.

Upon so slender a hope as this of recovering the remainder of so interesting a story, I took a journey into Oxfordshire: where I soon learnt that Mrs. Askham and her husband had both been dead many years; but that they had left three daughters, amongst whom (as they had no son) their father's estate of about six hundred pounds a year, had been equally divided. The two eldest were settled in a different part of the country; but the youngest who was her mother's favourite, having married unhappily a man who squandered her little fortune, was now a widow, and residing in the city of Oxford. The persons from whom I had this account, added, that she kept a haberdasher's shop, and as she had

two or three children, they believed she was in streightened circumstances.

To this person therefore I applied, and easily introduced myself by buying some of the goods in which she dealt. I found her a modest sensible woman, who seemed with great industry to apply herself to a little calling for the subsistence of her family; at the same time I could easily discover that her education had qualified her to appear in a much better sphere.

After I had, by two or three visits, made myself a little acquainted with her, I took occasion one day to ask her, whether she had ever heard her mother talk of Mrs. Arnold? She seemed startled at the question: Be not alarm'd, Madam, said I, at my enquiry, the part that Mrs. Askham bore in the history of that unfortunate lady will always do honour to her memory. I am surprized, Sir, replied she, how Mrs. Arnold's story came to be published; for tho' the names are all changed, I was too well acquainted with the characters of every person concerned in it, not to know for whom they were intended. I then told her with-

without reserve that I myself had been the editor, and the means by which I had got possession of the manuscript; acquainting her at the same time that I had learnt from the son of Mrs. Cecilia B—— that Mrs. Askham had had some papers containing very interesting particulars; and that if they still remained in the family, I should look upon it as a singular favour if she would procure me a sight of them. She told me she had them herself; but that as she should be very unwilling to part with them, she hoped I would excuse her not giving them out of her hands; but that to oblige me I should be very welcome to peruse them at her house, which she said I could do in two or three mornings, if I would take the trouble to call.

I thanked her for this permission, and accordingly waited on her the next morning; when I found her busied in ranging the papers in order on a table in her dining-room. Here, Sir, said she on my entering, you will find your curiosity fully gratified. These are copies of letters which passed between the several persons concern-

ed in the story they contain: they are all in my mother's hand-writing, who as she was in Mrs. Arnold's confidence to her last hour, wrote them out with the permission of the family, in order, as she has often told me, to preserve from oblivion the memory of so many uncommon events crowded into one life, and to leave the whole as a useful lesson to her children. I was the child she most loved, and she left these papers to me at her death. You will find in this parcel, continued she (pointing to a large packet which lay by itself) the former part of Mrs. Arnold's history, carried down to that period at which she retired from London on the news of Mr. Falkland's death; 'tis drawn up in a concise manner by my mother herself; if you are desirous to re-peruse this part of her story, I will leave it with you. I told her as I was already acquainted with Mrs. Arnold's history down to that æra, I had no curiosity to examine that packet; upon which she locked it up in a scrutoire which stood in the room, and left me to the perusal of the others.

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In three mornings I accomplished my task; and having expressed my acknowledgements to the owner for the entertainment these letters had afforded me, I frankly proposed the purchasing them from her, as I thought her situation in life would prevent her taking offence at such a proposal. She seemed at first very unwilling to part with them; but after urging a good many arguments, together with the offer of a very handsome gratuity, she at last consented; and I had the satisfaction to carry away with me the remaining part of Mrs. Arnold's history, which the following sheets contain.

The letters which passed between Mrs. Arnold and her friend Mrs. Cecilia B—— for the first eight or nine years after the final departure of the former from London, contain nothing material to the ensuing story. The melancholy state of Mrs. Arnold's mind gave a gloomy cast to most of those which were written by her in the first two or three years of this period: her patience and her fortitude seemed at length in a great measure to have subdued her

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grief,

grief, at least they taught her to suppress any expressions of it in her letters to her friend; and as the sad cause became less and less recent, she appears by degrees to wear off in some measure the impressions of her sorrow. The only events that the editor could gather from a series of letters during this interval, was the marriage of Patty Main to Mr. Askham; the death of Mr. Warner; who after having purchased a considerable estate in Oxfordshire (with a handsome house which he called Woodberry) left it to Mrs. Arnold, and appears to have died two years before the date of the first letter in this collection: and it seems to be much about the same time that Mrs. Arnold removed from her former dwelling in Buckinghamshire and came to settle in this near Oxford, with a view to be near young Falkland, whom she purposed to enter in that university. He learn'd also from these letters that lady V— had undertaken a journey from Lancashire on purpose to visit Mrs. Arnold, and had passed a whole summer with her; and it appears that Mrs. Cecilia B— had

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generally paid her friend a visit once a year.

In order therefore to take up the narrative as near as possible to that æra where Cecilia breaks off her's, he has suppressed all the preceding letters, and commences this collection with that which seems, if not immediately necessary, at least most pertinent to the following story, as it gives occasion to Cecilia's reply, which throws considerable lights on it. The editor has here and there only given extracts from letters, the remainder of which were foreign to his purpose; and has sometimes even ventured to throw in little narratives, the circumstances of which he collected from a variety of letters, containing several other things, and therefore too long and too immaterial to be inserted here.

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LET-

LETTER I,

Mrs. ARNOLD to Mrs. CECILIA B—.

Woodberry, March 9th.

THANK you, thank you, my dear, for delivering me so speedily from my fears. And so this frightful alarm has ended at last in a friendly fit of the gout! I congratulate Mr. B. upon it; yet I wish the disorder had been so complaisant as to have settled in his foot, before it attacked his stomach; and the good man now truly can't part with his nurse, but tell him I shall think him a very tyrant, if he does not let you down to me again, as soon as he grows a little better. Here it was *two* years since your last visit to me, you were but twelve hours in my house, (seven of which you were asleep) when flap comes down an express to hurry you away to Mr. B—, who took into his head forsooth that he was dying! Oh these men, Cecilia, are so pusillanimous when any thing ails them! —then it is (tho' perhaps they never discovered it before) that they find the comfort

fort of a good wife. Pray ask him, my dear, who but yourself would sit whole days stifling in a room like a hot-house, to hear him snarling in his elbow-chair? He must think me very sawcy for talking thus of one with whom I am so little acquainted; but is not that his own fault? How often have I pressed him to come into Oxfordshire? No, *the constant business of his employment could never suffer him to pay visits in the country.*—And you one would imagine had an employment at court too, for it was almost as difficult to draw you from London (to which place you *know* I have bid an eternal adieu) as it is your husband; but that I know is his fault, for which I am really angry with him; for let me tell him I love you, I am almost tempted to say as well as he does.

Remember in this last hasty visit we had neither time nor opportunity for half an hour's private chat. The presence of my little family prevented my asking you your opinion of them; and you are so full of Mr. B—and his gout, in your letter, that you speak of nothing else.—I expect that you will

B 6

make

make amends for this in your next.—But to be serious, for after all 'tis nothing but the joy I feel on being delivered from a painful suspense on your account, which has occasioned my spirits to flow into impertinence, I do most sincerely felicitate you on Mr. B——'s disorder's having taken so favourable a turn. According to the common opinion it may give you hope of a much longer continuance of so valuable a life. That you may for many many years continue a blessing to each other is the prayer of your affectionate, &c.

LETTER II.

Mrs. CECILIA B—— to Mrs. ARNOLD.

London, March 12th.

IF you knew all, my dear Sidney, you have less reason to reproach Mr. B—— than you have to thank him for his indulgence to us both. You know I told you I had taken lady Mapletost in my way, down to you, and spent a week with her. The truth is, this was a thought which



occurred to me on the road, merely suggested by seeing her house at the distance only of a mile out of my route; and as I had leave of absence for a month, I thought of stealing two or three days out of it, in order to dedicate them to this old friend; but I could not refuse her pressing entreaties to stay the week out. Now you must know that during that whole week poor Mr. B—— had been labouring under his painful disorder, for he was attacked with it the day after I left town, and his physicians could not tell what to make of it; yet *he*, supposing I was with you, would not send for me till the danger was apparently increased: see therefore, ungrateful as you are, how much you are indebted to his good nature, so let me have no more complaints; but make up by your correspondence, the loss I must submit to in being deprived of seeing you; for I certainly shan't have it in my power to repeat my visit to you till next year.

You wanted to ask my opinion of your young family, you say.—Sidney, you, who when a girl, with more reason to be vain than

than any woman living, had less vanity than any woman living, are I am afraid now you are come to years of discretion, (for we are neither of us old, you know) beginning to grow proud of your children. What should my opinion of them be? The girls are well enough, I think, for little things bred in the country; and your son Falkland, as you call him, is a good tolerable sort of a youth.

I have a great mind to stop here; Mr. B—, by whose bed-side I write, bids me do so; and to be revenged on you for talking of his snarling, leave you with this mortifying reply; but I have too much christian charity to bear malice in my heart, therefore take my real sentiments, which are, that I do from my soul think I never saw two such perfect creatures as your two daughters. I could scarce think it possible that a little more than two years could have produced such an alteration; they appear'd but children when I was last in Buckinghamshire, and I believe they now want but very little of your own fine stature. I think I never saw any thing equal
to

to the exquisite delicacy of Miss Arnold's figure; and for my name-sake, *such* a complexion, and *such* eyes! Oh, Sidney, that girl would do a world of mischief if she were in London; the men would tack her name to sword, pestilence and famine. Yet I imagine, that tho' her beauty might *surprize* more, it would *captivate* less than that of her sister; there is an expression in the softer charms of the elder, that would steal into the heart without one's perceiving it; and she has one of those faces that a man would fall in love with, without having first discover'd that she was a beauty. The endowments of their minds I think are answerable to those of their persons. How sensible, how polite, how modest is their whole deportment! As for the lesser accomplishments in which the common run of parents fancy the whole of a girl's education consists, which indeed are no more than a little garniture to it, they had made so considerable a progress in all those when I last saw them, that I suppose they are now complete. Indeed, Sidney, they wanted not the addition of twenty thousand

land pounds apiece, to enhance their worth ; and I can't help thinking it was a strange caprice in that whimsical old cousin Warner of your's, to leave them such a fortune independent of you. Yet he lived long enough to judge that their dutiful and sweet dispositions would not make an improper use of such an advantage.

How happy is your present situation, my dear, if you can forget the past, and look forward to the delightful prospect that is before you ! May your prudence, your virtue, your piety be revived and flourish, as well as your beauty does, in the persons of those two lovely girls. Yet I thought at the time I saw her, and with a sigh have since recollected, that Miss Arnold's health does not seem so perfect as I could wish. I observed a sort of languor in her countenance ; perhaps it was only my fancy ; or it may be the natural cast of her visage. I had not time to mention this when I was with you, yet I beg you will get the advice of some able physician ; if a decay—I won't finish the sentence—God preserve the dear creature

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to you ! But pray consult some one about her health ; the slightest attack would shatter so delicate a frame.

Well now I have done with your daughters, a word or two for your son. That same Falkland is a charming pretty young man ! You say he is not so handsome as his father was ; as I never saw his father, I can't contradict you ; but in my mind he is agreeable enough to be a very dangerous object in the same house with two young girls. I know you don't design him for either of them, don't you therefore think it time to separate them ? Falkland must be near eighteen ; were I to judge from his person only I should think him more.—I was pleased with his whole carriage, his filial respect towards you, and the tender innocent appellation of sister to the two girls, delighted me, and checked the fears, which would otherwise have arisen, that he might possibly have considered them in another light. I think him very happy in having so worthy a conductor as Mr. Price, who seems well to have discharged his duty in the care of
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this youth's education. With what pleasure the good old man regards his hopeful pupil!—I could say a thousand things more to you; but Mr. B—cries out, Have not you done yet? Yes, my dear, for I am come to the bottom of my paper. So adieu, my Sidney, God bless you and your amiable family.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Extract from Mrs. ARNOLD's answer to
Mrs. CECILIA B—

Woodberry, March 16th.

—With regard to Miss Arnold, 'tis only your tender fears, my dear, that have suggested to you the thought of her being in an ill state of health, I never had any reason to be of that opinion; yet as I know young people are apt to conceal slight indispositions, I have questioned her strictly on the subject, and she assures me that nothing ails her. Yet in consequence of the deference I pay to your judgment,
I have

I have consulted the ablest physician in this country. I suppose he thought it necessary to advise something, and therefore delivered it as his opinion, that tho' at *present* no symptoms of a disorder appeared, yet it was not impossible but that the young lady might be *tending towards* a consumptive habit, on which account he recommended by way of prevention only, that she should drink asses milk; and accordingly she is to take it every morning.

I am very glad my little Falkland has your approbation. I know you look with a scrutinous eye into the manners and behaviour of youth. I love this boy almost equally with my daughters; for, is he not, my Cecilia, the son of him who was once so dear to me, and whose memory must ever be precious to my heart? A hundred times a day does he recall his father's image fresh to my remembrance; the same agreeable vivacity, the same insinuating address, the same tender regard to every one with whom he is connected. His tutor perfectly adores him. My two
chil-

children have always considered and loved him as a brother; and I make them call him by that affectionate name. This idea I inculcated early amongst them; for having taken the dear, unhappy orphan into my protection, with a design to have him educated under my own eye, I thought that precaution would sufficiently guard the young people from ever entertaining a thought, much less a wish, that any other tie should ever take place; and indeed it has succeeded to my expectations; fraternal affection there is between them; and so I would have it; but nothing like a particular preference. To say the truth, I believe it seldom happens that persons brought up together from childhood, conceive a passion for each other. The eyes thro' which the hearts of most young people are reached, are first struck by novelty; and persons educated together almost from infancy, not having this advantage with regard to each other, by the time they come to an age susceptible of love, would much sooner be caught by an object less amiable than that to which they have been

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accustomed, merely because it was new. I mean to provide very handsomely for Falkland, and have always told him so; yet deserving as he is, I would not carry my partiality so far as to bestow on him either of my daughters. The unhappy circumstance of his birth forbids such a thought, had he even a fortune which would intitle to so considerable a match, as each of my daughters will be. Yet after all, my Cecilia, I think with you, that Orlando is now arrived at an age, which requires more precaution on my part, than has hitherto been necessary. I left it to his own election to make choice of any liberal profession to which his inclination most led him, for his patrimony is but a trifle. —His tutor, who you know is piety itself, would have persuaded him to the gown, for with his abilities, he says, he would be an ornament to the church; but my son, whose genius seems to incline him more to the military life, modestly excused himself to the good old man, and said he should prefer the army. To which poor Mr.

Price unwillingly assented; but as he could not bear the thoughts of his pupil's launching out into the world so extremely young, (for this proposal was made before we left Buckinghamshire) he beg'd to retain him a year or two longer under his care; and afterwards pleaded hard that he might enter the university, where he said he would learn to set a proper value on his literary acquisitions, a thing which the old gentleman himself rates very highly. This step therefore having been long determined, Falkland is to enter as a gentleman commoner of Exeter College the week after next. Thus you see, my dear, are your wishes anticipated, as Orlando will of course remove immediately from my house; and as you know we are five miles from Oxford, we probably shall seldom see him but in the vacations, and at the same time be near enough to have an eye to his conduct. Mr. Price is to continue with me, my chaplain in effect, tho' my rank in life does not qualify me to confer on him so formal a title.

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All under my roof kiss your hands a thousand times. Mrs. Askham, who dined with me yesterday, presents her best respects to you; she was inconsolable on hearing that you had been in this part of the country, and had left it before she knew of your arrival. She says, had she been informed of it, she would have flown to Woodberry, if it were only to get one look at you.—Adieu, my love.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Mrs. CECILIA B—— to Mrs. ARNOLD.

London, March 18th.

REJOICED as I always am to hear from you, I never was better pleas'd at the receipt of any letter from you than at that of your last, which came into my hands at a most happy juncture. You must know we have had a visit from Sir George Bidulph to-day; he was coming from court, and stop'd in just to ask Mr. B——

how he did. He seem'd surpris'd at seeing me, as he knew not I was come to town, having been inform'd the last time he was here, that I was gone down to Oxfordshire, with a design of passing a month with you.

After the first how-do-ye's were over, and Mr. B— had sworn two or three oaths at him, for hurting his toe with the point of his sword, as he brushed by his elbow-chair, Sir George address'd himself to me with Well, Madam, how does my sister do, for I have not had a line from her these two months? Sidney is too methodical a correspondent for me, for if I don't answer her letters punctually, I am sure not to hear a word from her; and faith 'tis impossible for a man to find time to write, when he is so perpetually engaged as I am;—and then he strutted up to the glass, again hurt Mr. B—'s toe, and received two or three more curses. I told him I had left you and your family perfectly well, and that you had been complaining to me of his silence. When are those two girls to take the veil? said he, turning round to me with a far-

farcaſtical ſmile: Or does their mother intend to marry one of them to young Falkland, and the other to old Price; for I don't know any other choice they can have, in that d—n'd place where ſhe keeps them buried alive. I was provoked at his gibe, not having ſuch an answer ready as I could have wiſh'd. Mr. B— laugh'd, and Sir George went on; I declare, Mrs. B—, you ladies of the *firſt* rate underſtandings, are the moſt unfit people upon earth to conduct the *common* affairs of life. Would any woman in the world, but Mrs. Arnold, keep two young ladies like my nieces, mew'd up in ſuch a wretched obſcure corner, where it is impoſſible they can *learn* any thing? You forget, I replied, how accompliſh'd your ſiſter herſelf was, who was bred up in the ſame manner. I don't mean, ſaid he, the common accompliſhments that are to be bought by paying a maſter; the learning I would have them acquire is a little knowlege of the world; which I am ſure my ſiſter with all her wiſdom, nor Price with all his philoſophy, will never be able to teach

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them : that is a science to be learnt only by mixing *with* the world. Three years ago, continued he, you may remember, when lady Sarah was in Buckinghamshire, she press'd my sister to let the two Miss Arnolds pass the winter with her in London, and Sidney's refusal of this request, though gloss'd over with a thousand fine excuses, is to tell you the truth, the reason of our never having paid her a visit since. They were too young at that time, I replied, and (for want of something else to say) added, for which perhaps you won't thank me,—I dare say were lady Sarah *now* to make the same proposa, Mrs. Arnold would readily embrace it. I don't know that, answered Sir George; I am afraid that Sidney is in some respects but too like ——— he stopped short : but I knew what he *would* have said, and that your dear good mother was then in his thoughts. For heaven's sake, pursued he (in his impatient way) do you know what she intends to do with that boy ? To marry him to her eldest daughter, cried Mr. B—— lengthening out the last word from a twitch

a twitch of the gout which at that minute seized him. By my soul may be so, said Sir George ; that would be tipping the spire, and winding up her bottoms with a witness. Mr. B—— who only spoke in jest, laughed and grunted at Sir George's taking it so seriously. I will venture to say, replied I, such a wild thought never entered into Mrs. Arnold's head. I should suppose so too, said Sir George ; your husband has only a mind to be pleasant. No, Mrs. B—, continued he very solemnly, well as I loved that noble fellow his father, whose fate to this hour I deplore, I would not consent that my niece should marry the *illegitimate* offspring of the best man in the kingdom.—But in the present case, nothing but frenzy could suggest such a thought ; a poor young fellow who has no prospect in the world but from my sister's bounty ! I own I could never have a very cordial regard for that youth, on his vile mother's account ; it is an unwarrantable prejudice I grant ; but as my mother used to say of hers, (which by the

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way,

way she would never allow to *be* prejudices) it is *unconquerable*.

Just at this word my maid entered the room, and gave me your letter: having read it over to myself, and found there was nothing in it but what your brother might see, I presented it to Sir George, who having kept a profound silence during the time I took to read it, I concluded had been waiting in expectation of at least hearing part of it. I requested him to read it aloud, that Mr. B— might participate with us.

I saw Sir George's countenance brighten, for I watched his looks, when he came to that part of it where you mention your designs with regard to Orlando. In returning me the letter, your brother said, Sidney is more *rational* than I expected, (a high compliment you'll say) you see in *this* particular, laying his finger on the paragraph which related to young Falkland's birth, she judges pretty much as I do; a sufficient reason, my dear, for allowing you to think *rationally*: and yet, pursued he smiling, I perceive, from some
part

part of my sister's letter, that *you* Mrs. B— were not without your fears, ridiculous as the idea appeared to us all just now; for my part I shall be always ready to *serve* the young man, and as far as my interest goes will push him forward in life when he enters into the profession of which he has made choice; poor fellow, he is not accountable for the iniquities of his mother. I found that Sir George, so soon as he had lost his apprehensions, suffered his humanity to return. These men of the world learn, I believe, to accommodate their feelings as well as their language to exterior circumstances. As for my nieces, continued he, there is no doubt of their being intitled to marry into some of the best families in the kingdom; but unless my sister supposes that on the bare *fame* of their perfections, she will have them demanded of her like princesses, I don't see how this is very likely to be effected. 'Tis a pity you don't get them to town, said Mr. B——; I know no one so fit as lady Sarah to introduce them into life. I bit my lips at this: Ah, thought

I, my Sidney *has* a friend, whom I dare believe she thinks as well qualified as her ladyship for this task; but unfortunately *that friend* is not enough mistress of her own actions to make the offer. Lady Sarah would like it extremely, said Sir George, and if Mrs. Arnold is disposed to let them, I shall be as ready to receive them as I was before; but the season is now too far advanced for such a proposal, as we shall go into Somersetshire early in the summer, so that this design can't possibly take place till next winter; I shall however, when I write next to my sister, again make her the offer.

I have given you the substance of Sir George's conversation, and shall now throw in as my own opinion, as well as that of others, that it is really time for young ladies of your daughters fortunes and condition in life, to see a little of the beau monde.—Their situations in the world will probably be very conspicuous (at least Sir George's endeavours will not be wanting to make them so) and one would not chuse that young creatures
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should emerge at once from solitude, and appear as *principals* in the glare and bustle of the gay world; for fine as are their understandings, and charmingly elegant as is their whole behaviour, there is a certain ease of deportment, which you know characterizes real good breeding, and which can be attained in no other way but by being familiarized to the modes of the great world; and your *very* fine people, who do not give modesty the first place in their catalogue of virtues, would be apt to call the sweet timidity of Miss Arnold, country bashfulness. Now I want this to be a *leetle* overcome, before she is set down perhaps under the necessity of keeping visiting days for half the coxcombs and flaunting women of quality in town to assemble at her house. Sir George really keeps the best company, and lady Sarah, poor as her intellects are, is an adept in all the fashionable fopperies of the times, and even *passes* for a sensible woman: besides, what situation can be more eligible (your own maternal care out of the question) than an uncle's house, under

the guidance of his lady, both of them people in considerable estimation?

I have urged this point the more, as I know you have so mean an opinion of lady Sarah, that I am still apprehensive of your unwillingness to venture so precious a charge as your two daughters with her: and I have been the speedier in writing to you, that as I am certain your brother means to repeat his offer, I may be beforehand as well in preparing you for it, as in begging of you to accept it. Pray, my dear, *descend* a little, and think more, like one of us.

I embrace you, and the dear girls, and salute the fine old man and the fine young man; and pray tell Mrs. Askham that I regret as much as she does our not having met.

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LETTER V.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Mrs. CECILIA B——

Woodberry, March 29th.

CECILIA, with all my faults, I was never accounted inflexible; you needed not therefore have united your force, with that of my brother, to persuade me to a thing which in itself I think reasonable, and against which, whatever little collateral objections I have to it in my own private thoughts, I can offer none to Sir George, because they relate altogether, as you very well know, to lady Sarah. Poor woman! She was herself spoil'd when a girl by the weak indulgence of her mother. She has never had any children of her own, to call forth those little maternal attentions, so necessary in conducting young people; and she is besides (notwithstanding the world's kind opinion) not overburdened with discretion; so that, upon the whole, I do indeed

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deed.

deed think her but a sorry pilot to guide a young lady through the stormy pleasures of your great town. I rely however on my brother's care, and *have* consented to let both my girls be with him next winter: now are you satisfied?

I received a very obliging letter from my brother three days ago, in which he kindly repeated his invitation to my daughters; but at the same time threw out a hint that vexed me, viz. that having no children of his own to provide for, his nieces fortunes might not be *impaired* by making themselves agreeable to him and lady Sarah.—This very item, Cecilia, almost tempted me to write him a refusal; for won't it look, to one of Sir George's cast, (you, my dear, know him as well as I do) as if it had its weight in inducing me to comply with a proposal which I had before declined. Yet *you* must be convinced such a motive could have no influence on me at any time, if balanced with more material objections to the offer; how much less then in my present affluent flow of fortune? The truth is, I have
yield-

yielded to Sir George's request merely for my daughters sake; for I agree with you in every argument, that you have urged in favour of this step; and at the same time I acknowledge that I should be very unwilling to disoblige a brother with whom I have now lived for so many years upon the best terms. And upon reflection, I am pleased that matters are settled as they are; for to tell you a secret, I had resolved to send my daughters to town early next winter under the care of lady Audley, to whom, next to yourself, I would sooner commit that important charge than to any one I know. For she has united in her, qualities which do not *constantly* meet in the same person; that is to say, she is an excellent good woman, besides being, in the *best*, not the most *modish* acceptation of the word, a *real* fine lady. I believe I formerly mentioned her to you as one of the first acquaintances that I made on my coming to settle in this country. She has an elegant little house at Oxford, just without the town, where she generally passes half the year; and

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were

were she to follow her own inclinations, would prefer living entirely in the country; but in complaisance to her daughter, she always spends her winters in London. She is to an extravagant degree partial to my two girls; and as there is a great intimacy between them and Miss Audley, I thought they could not be more agreeably situated. I am sure lady Audley will be very sorry for the disappointment. She had pressed me earnestly, and I made her a half promise that my daughters should be with her; but if this intention were to have taken place, I know Sir George would never have forgiven me, so I think 'tis better as it is. My son took his leave of us yesterday, and repaired to Oxford to enter on his academic course of life. You can't imagine how awkward we all felt after his departure. My two girls cried all the morning: and when we sat down to dinner, the footman having thro' inadvertence placed a chair for him, disconcerted us again, when on his removing it, he said, I forgot that Mr. Falkland was *gone*. What do you mean by *gone*? said Mr. Price,

with

with as angry a look as his complaisant countenance could assume; is not he just by us here in the neighbourhood? He look'd at me and then at my two children. The good man himself was affected at parting with him, and saw that we were so too: but this little passing cloud soon blew over, and we are all sunshine again.

LETTER VI.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Mrs. CECILIA B—

Woodberry, May 26th.

POOOR lady V—, how I am grieved for her! I have just received a letter from Miss Darnley, her youngest niece, who tells me they are all in the deepest affliction. I believe I have told you that lord V—'s undutiful behaviour had so disoblighd his mother, that she had never seen him since his father's death. He was always her favourite son, and this disappointment of her hopes it was, which first disgusted her with the world, and
 OCCA-

occasioned her retiring from it. Lord V—, it seems, whether from compunction, or the overflowings of a heart naturally good, and perverted only by evil habits, had lately by letter solicited a reconciliation with his mother. Lady V— received this overture from her son with joy; and having expressed a desire to see him, he immediately set out for Lancashire, and about a month ago arrived at Mrs. Darnley's house; where he was received by his tender mother with as much pleasure (so Miss Darnley expresses herself) as his first entrance into life had given her; but her joy was of a very short duration. Lord V— was invited to an election-dinner, where having drank too freely, he was seized with a fever which in six days carried him to his grave. He died in his mother's arms, with the strongest expressions of regret for his past ill conduct towards her. What a blow to so affectionate a parent! How I feel for this excellent woman! Her tenderness had revived towards him with redoubled ardour in this melancholy

moment of eternal separation; and he was snatched from her at a time, when his returning duty and filial affection had opened to her a source of happiness, which she thought had been for ever shut up. Miss Darnley says she is inconsolable; and adds, that neither she nor her mother are at present in a condition to comfort her, being themselves too deeply affected at this so unexpected and melancholy an event. Miss Darnley concludes her letter with the most pressing instances for me to go down to Burnly. ‘Your conversation, Madam,’ says she, ‘I know would have a better effect on my aunt than any thing we can say to her. Can you then refuse this consolation to poor lady V—? If you do favour us with your company, I believe I need not tell you how happy it will make *me*, if you bring with you the two Miss Arnolds. Remember you have long owed us a visit.’

Miss Darnley tells me in a postscript, that the younger brother, now lord V—, is at present with his regiment in Flanders;

ders; but that they expect him home at the end of the campaign.—I think, my Cecilia, this event must unroot me. I had as good as resolved never to have stirred from hence, and began to consider myself like one of the trees in my grove, which are doomed to drop unnoticed in the solitude where they grew. I am really become so in love with my retirement, that it is a pain to me to think of quitting it, for ever so short a space; yet I am afraid this is being too selfish; I will not therefore indulge the habit which I find every day growing stronger upon me. How I should hate myself, how you would despise your Sidney, if she should prefer her own satisfaction to that of the friend she loved!

I have written a letter of condolance to poor lady V—, and have told her I mean immediately to follow it myself, and intend to bring my two daughters with me to kiss her hands; adding, that I shall pass the summer at Burnly, if Mrs. Darnley will suffer me and my little household to incommode her so long.—

LETTER VII.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Mrs. CECILIA B——

Woodberry, June 2d.

OUR little plan of operations has been partly disconcerted by an accident, which however I hope will be attended with no other disagreeable consequences than that of obliging me to leave one of my girls at home.

A cold which Dolly had got by walking too late by the river side, occasioned my deferring my journey into Lancashire for some days; but as she is now better, we were all in readiness and intended to have set off to-morrow morning, when to-day, just as we sat down to dinner, I perceived a chariot, the horses upon full gallop, driving up the avenue. It stopped at the door, and Miss Audley sprung out of it, with a precipitation that alarmed me, as I thought that something extraordinary was the cause; and so indeed there was; for what can occasion greater consternation to a fine girl than the fear of losing

losing her beauty? The case in short was this; Master Audley, a boy of about nine years old, and the darling of the family, was taken ill of the small-pox. Miss, who is about eighteen, has never had it, and the doctor no sooner announced the distemper, than poor lady Audley, in the utmost terror, ordered the chariot and hurried her daughter out of the house, who you may imagine was not less frightened than herself. Miss Audley told me her mama's extreme apprehensions had obliged her to intrude upon my good nature, in begging that I would suffer Miss to stay with me till the danger was over. I told the young lady I was extremely obliged to lady Audley for honouring me with such a preference; and that I should have thought myself but too happy in her company, if an indispensable engagement had not for the present rendered it impossible for me to enjoy it. I then told her of the absolute promise I was under of going into Lancashire; but without mentioning my design of taking my daughters with me; said if she would
dispense

dispense with *my* absence, the two Miss Arnolds and Mr. Price (whom I looked upon as the father of the family) would endeavour to make her stay as agreeable as possible. I know, Madam, said she, you never go any where without the Miss Arnolds; I am certain you meant to take them with you, and 'tis your politeness only which prevents you from saying so. I see I am come unseasonably; Lord what shall I do! My dear; answered I, 'tis paying you but a very slight compliment to leave my daughters with you, and I assure you if it were not for breaking thro' the laws of faith and friendship, as well as good manners, I would not stir from home myself. As I had not in this reply denied my intention of taking my girls with me, Miss Audley answered, I would not for the world be the means of hindering the young ladies from going with you, I am sure lady V— and Miss Darnley would hate me. Dear Mrs. Arnold, continued she, you can't imagine how I am distressed; for besides the opinion my mama has of you and the Miss Arnolds,

Arnolds,

Arnolds, she really has not an acquaintance with whom she would take the same liberty, whose house she thinks at a sufficient distance from the infection, for there is nothing in nature I so much dread. I know she would be very unhappy to be obliged to send me to London, neither should I be easy to be so far out of the reach of hearing from my poor little brother ; yet that must be my choice, for positively I won't consent to have the Miss Arnolds left at home. Well, my dear Miss Audley, said I, to make you easy at once, I'll compound the matter with you ; I will take one of my daughters with me, and leave the other to keep house with you. That settles the matter at once, cried out both my girls in a breath. Miss Audley made a few civil objections to this proposal ; but they were easily got over, and in the end I agreed to leave Dolly to bear her company ; tho' by the way I thought Cecilia would have been as well pleased to have staid as she ; but I made choice of her sister for two reasons ; Dolly has a flexibility and tenderness in her nature,

border-

bordering almost, as you have observed, even upon melancholy, and I thought the house of mourning to which we are going, would but serve to soften her feeling heart too much. Cecilia, you know, is all vivacity, and not so susceptible of impressions. My other reason was, that it appeared rather more respectful to lady Audley, to leave my eldest daughter by way of my representative.

Thus then have we settled these important ceremonials, which had like to have turned us all topsy turvy, and I hold my resolution of setting out to-morrow; but I believe this little incident will make me shorten the intended length of my visit to lady V—. I received a letter in the afternoon from lady Audley, who now being more composed, repeated, in very polite terms, the request her daughter had before made by word of mouth. I writ her ladyship word how we had accommodated matters, and the young people seem mightily pleased at the thoughts of their being together. Miss
Audley

Audley is very amiable; yet for her years, I have sometimes thought her a little too *womanly*; I do not mean by this, that she has the least degree of forwardness; but she has none of that *timidity*, of which you seemed to wish, Dolly had less. Miss Audley has overcome it probably by the very means you recommended, a constant intercourse with the gay world; yet I believe her a very good young creature; I am sure she has an excellent example in her mother. The eldest son, Sir Edward, is of the same college with my Orlando, who speaks very handsomely of him; but by the bye I hear he is a little extravagant, having (as he has been of age some time) already dipt his estate, which is not very considerable, yet lady Audley's œconomy enables her to live with great elegance on, as I am told, a very moderate jointure.

Dolly desires me to conjure you to write to *her* in my absence; we have no correspondents at present in London but yourself, and she says she shall long to know

know how you and Mr. B— do. Adieu, my Cecilia; when you write next, direct to me at Burnly.

LETTER VIII.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Mrs. CECILIA B—.

Burnly, July 15th.

YOU can't imagine, my Cecilia, how I am divided, at present, in my thoughts: my heart is as it were cleft in twain, and while one half of it is retained in Oxfordshire, the other remains chained here, by the tender ties of compassion as well as friendship for poor lady V—. She still continues in the same melancholy state; that stupor, which I told you had succeeded to the first outrages of her grief, is much more alarming to her friends than her former condition. She sits for hours without speaking, and no one in the house but myself can rouse her from her lethargy. She takes delight in hearing me talk over my own melancholy story, and it is by this means only we can engage her

her to enter into conversation ; and indeed it is by this means that I am not without hope of bringing her by degrees to a better frame of mind ; for she constantly compares *my* calamities with her *own*, then condemns her own impatience under an evil which she allows inferior to *many* I have suffered, praises my fortitude, and promises to imitate it, yet again relapses into her grief. Thus circumstanced, you see 'tis impossible for me to desert her ; yet when I think of poor Dolly's situation, I am almost tempted (selfish as I am) to leave my friend a prey to her sorrow, and fly to my child. The dear creature ! she has gone through a scene of uneasiness and anxiety, which her tenderness for me made her conceal till the danger was over. I had a letter from her by the last post, wherein she tells me

[Here Mrs. Arnold gives the substance of what her daughter writes ; but as the young lady's own letter appears, her mother's account of it is omitted. Mrs. Arnold then proceeds]

To

To be sincere with you, I had no sooner read this, than forgetting the duties of charity, as well as my attachments of gratitude to lady V. I as good as resolved to return home directly. I even went so far as to apprise Mrs. Darnley of my design, putting my daughter's letter at the same time into her hand. The tears came into the poor lady's eyes the minute I talked of going; for she doats on her sister. What will become of us, cried she, when you are gone? The agitation she observed in my countenance made her conclude that something indispensable called me away. Having read my daughter's letter, Compose yourself, my dear madam, said she, read this over again, and then I hope you will not think there is so *absolute* a necessity for your presence at Woodberry. My fears, indeed, upon a second perusal, were much abated, and I found that my imagination only had painted to me as *present*, a danger which in reality had been over for some time. What becomes of our reason, my Cecilia, in those moments of surprize? to what corner does the sluggard retire, to

wait for the calmer hours of reflection, when the busy passions are all up and alarmed?

I am sure Dolly would not deceive me : I therefore flatter myself that matters are as well at home as she has represented them, yet I cannot be quite easy at this distance from my family. Poor Cecilia wishes to be with her sister : indeed I almost repent my having brought her with me ; yet how could I refuse miss Darnley's request, especially after she had my promise that both my daughters should attend her ? In short, I am in such an unsettled state of mind, as really gives some little merit to my stay at Burnly. Yet I am ashamed to balance what I consider merely as the partial tenderness of a parent, with the more important offices of Christianity, which, in poor lady V.'s case, *demand* my attendance here ; and I could never forgive myself, if I neglected the means which her friends, and indeed I myself, think are in my power to restore, in some measure, her mind to tranquillity. Thus constrained by duty, I believe I must continue here,
according

according to my first promise, till the latter end of August; so that you must expect nothing from hence but the anecdotes of this gloomy mansion.

LETTER IX.

Miss ARNOLD to Mrs. ARNOLD.

(The Letter which is referred to in the above.)

Woodberry, July 8th.

DON'T be angry with me, my dear mama, for having concealed from you an accident which terrified us all here to death; but our apprehensions are now over, thank God, thank God! Do not be frightened, madam, for indeed the danger is intirely past; but we had like to have lost, Oh! mama, we had like to have lost poor Orlando!

About a week ago he came to see us one evening, and Sir Edward Audley came with him, to pay a visit to his sister. I never loved that Sir Edward Audley, and

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shall

shall love him now less than ever. Mr. Falkland and he were in the garden together, and Sir Edward (unlucky creature!) proposed leaping from the hah at the end of the terrace into the meadow. Miss Audley and I were looking at them from my dressing-room window. Sir Edward took his leap first, and came on his feet at the other side. Orlando followed him; we saw him fall, and that even with the assistance of his companion he seemed not able to rise. Miss Audley says I shriek'd out. I can't tell whether I did or not; but I know I found myself at the end of the terrace without knowing how I got thither. Poor Orlando was standing up by that time, and seemed to be in violent pain. Sir Edward told us that the ground being slippery (for we have had a good deal of rain lately) had occasioned him to miss his step, and having leaped just on the edge of the steep, he had tumbled down and dislocated his shoulder.

He walked in, though with difficulty. Mr. Price (good, good man, how I love him for his fatherly tenderness) was in the utmost concern.



concern. He sent immediately to Oxford for Mr. Oswald, who not being very readily to be found, poor Orlando suffered four hours of the most exquisite torture. I think I am no very great coward, mama, when any thing ails me; but I don't know how it is, the seeing another in violent pain has something in it that extremely affects my spirits: for when Mr. Oswald (who did not arrive till near ten o'clock at night) was setting Mr. Falkland's shoulder, I fainted away twice, though I was in a distant part of the house, merely at the thought of what he endured. When the operation was over, Mr. Price had him put into bed, and sat up with him the whole night; but we had all, thoughtless as we were, neglected one material thing, which was what had like to have been fatal to Mr. Falkland; for with regard to the accident of his shoulder, Mr. Oswald said there was nothing dangerous in it; but it seems the bottom of that vile ditch into which he had fallen was full of water, and he had been wet quite through, without either he himself or any of us perceiving

it: so that having sat so long in that condition, he had got a violent cold, which threw him the next day into a high fever. I would have written to my dear mama an account of this immediately; but I am glad I was directed by a wiser head than my own. Mr. Price advised me not; he thought it would be giving you unnecessary pain, as probably his pupil's disorder might go off in a few days: this, therefore, it was which prevented my mentioning our situation to you in my last letter; but indeed, madam, you know not what I have suffered since. They would all have persuaded me that Orlando never was in any *very* great danger; but I am sure *I* thought he was, and for five days and nights have never left his bed-side, in spite of all that Mr. Price or Miss Audley could say to me. She indeed is kind enough to sit up with with me; Mrs. Nelson does the same; but the unfeeling fat old woman always falls asleep in the easy chair. Pray, mama, would not you have watched your poor Orlando with as much care as I have done? I am sure you would. But he is now, with joy I can assure

sure

sure you, he is now much better. He presents his duty and most respectful love to you, and begs to be tenderly remembered to my sister. Be so good, madam, to make my compliments to lady V. Mrs. and Miss Darnley, and tell my Cecilia I long to embrace her. Mr. Price bids me assure you that he never forgets you in his devotions.

I am, my beloved mama, &c.

LETTER X.

Miss AUDLEY to Sir EDWARD AUDLEY.

Woodberry, July 10th.

*O*H 'tis in vain, 'tis all in vain!—I hope, my dear Edward, you will not go on with the old song, and say, *Death and despair must end the fatal, fatal, &c.* But in plain prose, all that I have been saying and doing for you is to no purpose, and our design is dropt plumb to the ground!—Heavens! cry you, is it possible? can the lovely, the tender, the flexible Dorothea,

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(for *Dolly* won't do when we talk in heroics) can she in that soft bosom hide a flinty heart? No such thing, child, her heart is as tender as you could wish it; nay more, this fair insensible, this alabaster statue, as you used to call her, glows at this minute with the most ardent passion! but not for you, Edward; no, brother, you are not the happy man. Who the duce is then? cry you again. Simpleton, can't you guess? But I don't wonder that *you* should not, when the poor thing herself did not know a word of the matter till I found it out for her. I'll tell you how it was. You remember the evening that Falkland met with the accident, Miss Arnold and I were looking at you from one of the windows. Her frantic scream at seeing him fall, and her flying like a wood-nymph to the place where he lay, gave me the first suspicion of the real state of her heart, and determined me to observe her closely. On finding him so violently hurt, I perceived an energy in her grief to which neither friendship nor even fraternal love could have given rise; for well as I love
you,

you, Edward, I do really believe I should not have been so much affected, had the mischance befallen you, as she was at its having happened to Falkland; and yet the poor innocent deceived herself with a belief that it was only because *our brother* Orlando, as their mother has taught them to call him, had met with such a disaster. During the time of his illness, she was so possessed with a firm persuasion of his danger (a natural fear where a life *particularly* dear to us is in the question) that she *would* watch by him herself. I in civility to her could not avoid doing the same. As for honest Price, who saw there was nothing really dangerous in the case, he used, after he had smoked his pipe and *set the watch*, as he called it (finding he could not persuade Miss Arnold out of her apprehensions) to retire quietly to bed. The housekeeper, for form-sake, always made one of our nocturnal party; but the good woman constantly snored away the night in perfect tranquillity. It was in those hours I saw the genuine source of Dolly's attention laid open. With what tender solicitude did she

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watch

watch every breath that he respired! If he sighed, she started, and with a voice softer than the breezes of the youngest Zephyr, would she enquire how he did. She would herself give him such little medicines as were prescribed; and I could observe her hand tremble, when in presenting them to him, it happened to touch his. Oh, Edward, these symptoms were too strong not to indicate the disease to one more ignorant than I am. I knew Dolly was as ingenuous as truth itself; yet love teaches the best of us art, and I was resolved to try what proficiency she had made in its school. I pretended, the night before last, to be very drawzy, and begged she would dispense with my sitting up with her. Bless me, said she, sure you would not leave me to attend Mr. Falkland alone! you know Nelson cannot keep awake a minute—And of what use would she be to you, I replied, were she ever so watchful, since you take the care of your patient intirely on yourself? But the *impropriety* of it! said Miss Arnold.—*Impropriety*, my dear! what impropriety is there in attending.

ing a sick *brother*? I said the last word with an emphasis, fixing my eyes on her at the same time, and I believe I looked a little archly.—A faint blush overspread her face, and with a sigh she answered, Oh, Sophy, you know that is but a *name*, and that Mr. Falkland is in reality no relation to me. Ah, Dolly, cried I, have I at last caught you? I am no longer now to seek the cause of your being so deaf to all my pleadings for poor Sir Edward! She looked terrified—What do you mean, Miss Audley? Nothing, my dear, but that you love Falkland better. Certainly, *maam*—But *much* better, Miss Arnold, better than you do any body—We have been brought up together, said she (her voice faltering as if in an ague-fit) I have been taught --- to love him from my infancy. Ask your heart this plain question, said I, and report to me honestly the answer it makes you; Is there any one in the world so dear to it as Orlando Falkland? She paused a little, then bursting into tears, she threw herself on my neck, and only sobbed out, Oh, Miss Audley, this is cruel! I let her

passion have vent, then embracing her in my turn, You have no reason to be ashamed, my dear, said I; for spite of my partiality to my brother (whose hopes I see are now at an end) I must acknowledge that I know no one more amiable or more deserving of your heart than Mr. Falkland.

My *heart*! said she, and again renewed her tears; Oh fye, fye upon such a heart, that never gave me warning of my danger till it was past remedy! But I have one comfort left, added she, Orlando has not the least suspicion that I —— The formidable word *love* stuck in her throat, and she stopped short; but I eek'd out the sentence for her, and replied coolly, *that you love him*; he must be blind then, for I have seen it a long time—What a weak wretch I am! cried she. For what, my dear miss Arnold? Is there any thing blameable in your loving a handsome accomplished young man, whom every one admires? But circumstanced as I am, said she, and without the least advance on his side, who, I am sure, only considers me

as

as a friend—There, my dear, I am sure you are in an error; for if I am not mistaken, Falkland loves you as well as you do him. I saw a beam of pleasure lighten in her languid eyes; for however repugnant to prudence, to interest, nay to duty and reason itself, our passion may be, though we endeavour to hide it, and even wish and struggle perhaps to rid ourselves of it, though the accomplishment of our wishes may be at ever so great a distance; nay though they appear even impracticable, yet there is a bewitching pleasure in the thought of being beloved again that we cannot resist. This is vanity, brother; but it is the way of us women; and of you men too, I suppose, if you would but be honest enough to own it; but your pride helps you out on those occasions, and if you are not kindly received, you assume a noble air of indifference, are sorry you lost so much time, and will give yourself no farther trouble, when all the while you would part with one of your eyes to make the poor woman as uneasy as yourself.

Well, but now you will ask me how comes it that I not only deserted *your* cause, but even became an advocate for Falkland? The question is pertinent, Sir, and deserves a serious answer. Thus it is then.

To be plain with you, though I could not resist your intreaties, I had very little hopes of this affair from the beginning. When I first mentioned your love to Miss Arnold, and endeavoured to sound *her* inclinations, she expressed herself so *very* civilly of you, that I at once gave the thing up for lost. Had she affected not to understand me, and given herself a few pretty airs (which by the bye the poor dear girl does not know how to do) nay, had she pretended to have been angry with *me*, and found twenty faults with *you*, I should have had some hopes of her. But no such thing; she resented not my urging your suit, nor threw out a single expression of disapprobation towards you; but on the contrary, having paid your personal merit some compliments, she added, Yet I wish, for his own as well as *your* sake, that he
had

had honoured some one else with his affections; for besides (forgive me, my dear) some objections which I know my mama would have to him, I really do not find in myself the least inclination towards him.

This was too mortifying a reply, Sir Edward, to be repeated to a lover; and you know, therefore, that without absolutely extinguishing your hopes, I never flattered them. The truth is, I did not then suspect that you had a rival, and did not know what time, perseverance, and opportunity might do; accordingly, having lost the hopes of the girls being in town with us next winter, I made myself an inmate at Woodberry, in order to improve, if possible, every minute to your advantage; but I am now convinced my endeavours will be fruitless with regard to miss Arnold, and I do most seriously recommend it to you to think no more of her. Now do I see you bite your lips, *Think no more of her!* that's mighty easily said, truly! And so all my expectations, and your pretended efforts to serve your brother, must end in, *Think no more of her!*

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How

How ridiculous this is of you, Sophy, when I have told you that I am in love with miss Arnold!—Very true; but have not you at the same time a small tendresse for her fortune, my dear brother? Psha, what then? Ought not you, for that very reason, not so slightly to have given up my interests, and preferred those of my rival? And now pray what are those reasons which you were to give me for acting so unkind a part? Softly, don't be in a passion, and I'll tell you; for this is the very place where they will come in pat. Miss Arnold, I again repeat it to you once for all, is as much out of your reach as if she were in the moon. I am sorry for it, because I believe you love her; at the same time I cannot think a flame so newly kindled can have gathered strength enough to render it inextinguishable. Don't you think it possible, my dear Edward, to transfer it to her sister? Cecilia has *twenty thousand pounds* as well as Dolly; she is very pretty, very lively, and it is to be presumed intirely disengaged; and as you never made any *personal* addresses to miss Arnold, what
I have

I have said to her can easily be turned off. I have known a courtship begun in pleasantry, and apparently to pique another woman, end in very serious consequences. I can tell you it was Cecilia that my mama had in her thoughts for you, when she pressed Mrs. Arnold to let both the ladies pass the winter with her in London; for indeed ~~we were both of opinion that~~ Dolly was too reserved, and too much bigotted to her duty, to venture on disposing of herself without her mother's consent, and that's a thing not to be look'd for; for besides Mrs. Arnold's thinking you a little *naughty*, as Dolly hinted to me, there are such things as jointures and settlements, and such impertinent incumbrances, always tack'd to the tail of a parent's consent; and you are sensible it would be rather inconvenient to you at present to have your rent-roll scrutinized by fellows in great wigs. My advice, therefore, is, that you leave Falkland in quiet possession of his conquest, and turn your arms towards a less impregnable fortress. Having given you the end of my clue, now can't you

you

you go on unwinding it, till you have developed the reasons of my conduct, which lie snug, like a silkworm in the midst of its web? You can't, you say! You are very dull, Edward; you a logician! Don't you see that if miss Arnold be encouraged in her inclination for Falkland, she may by degrees be brought to receive his private addresses? Terrified as she now is at the bare thought of such a transgression, the approaches to it will be so sweet, so flattering to her wishes, that she may be led imperceptibly to the very point; the mere mention of which would, at this minute, make her start. And don't you see that this will open the way for you to her sister? If Dolly should after all be so old-fashion'd as to yield the interests of her heart to her obedience, as her mother did before her, why there is an end of my whole plan; but if on the contrary, the girl, strongly prepossessed as she is in favour of Falkland, and aided with a little of my good advice and assistance, will pluck up spirit enough to choose for herself, I think our, or rather *my* design, may be accomplished. There

is

is nothing like the force of example, Edward; and Cecilia has been so used to look up to her sister as a pattern, that it would be strange if she did not follow her lead in this, as well as in other things. Short as my acquaintance with the world has been, many a match have I known brought about by this very means. You can't imagine how awkward a girl feels if her sister has a lover, and she none. I take it for granted that Falkland need only be informed of them, to avail himself of the kind sentiments miss Arnold has for him. Be it your care to acquaint him with that secret, as one you picked out of me. You know nothing is more natural; and this of course must engage him to forward your interests with Cecilia. They say grief is lightened by partnership: I fancy people think that blame is so too; for we are generally mighty glad to have others participate with us in the same fault, and I don't suppose that a young man of Falkland's age and spirit will be over-scrupulous on this point; neither do I see any reason why young ladies, whose fortunes render them inde-

independent, should not please themselves in the choice of husbands.

I have written this letter by fits and starts, as I could steal time and opportunity. Poor Dolly is so frightened at the discovery she has made of the situation of her own heart, that she appears to me as if she wanted to fly from herself, and, contrary to those romantic lovers who choose in solitude to indulge their tender ideas, she seeks my company more than ever. Not to talk of Falkland though, don't mistake the matter; she is now afraid even to name him, and always tries to avoid the subject; but I, who think it would be a pity so bright a flame should die for want of a little *fanning*, contrive always to introduce him into our conversation by the name of *some* body, and under this appellation she suffers me to say twenty wild things that would startle her were I to join the dreaded name of *Falkland* to them. Long as this letter is, I have a hundred other things to say to you; but I'll send it off as it is, and when you have considered the matter a little, let me know your mind.

Your's, in a violent hurry; for here's miss Arnold coming up stairs. S. A..

LETTER XL

Sir EDWARD AUDLEY to Miss AUDLEY.

Oxford, July 13th.

I Have taken three days to consider your long letter; and the reason is, because I only *think* as you *write*, by fits and starts. I laughed heartily at that part of it where you so seriously recommend Cecilia to me. It put me in mind (pardon the comparison) of my man David, who having lost a very fine pointer, of which I was extremely fond, told me he'd *see and get me another every jot as pretty*. Block-head, said I, what's that to the purpose? Lord, Sir, said he, is not one dog as good as another?—You seem to be pretty much of David's opinion, Sophy, and to think that one *woman* is as good as another; and faith, upon the whole, you are not much mistaken: for to me the only essential difference is fortune; and I would not abate a girl a thousand pound for all the charms of

of Helen, and the chastity of Lucrece into the bargain.

That I did love the gentle Dorothea, is most true ;
True, I would have married her——

But since she has slipped through our fingers, I'll e'en be content with Cecilia, who, as David said of the dog, is every jot as pretty. Seriously, I do exceedingly admire miss Arnold ; and when I appointed you my soft embassadress, I commissioned you to speak the real sentiments of my heart ; for I *was* within a hair's breadth of being actually in love with her, and *had* she been kind !—But 'tis no matter, I'll not hang myself this bout ; my heart (how I hug the dear rogue for it) is as obedient to me as my hand, and I have forbid it ever to breathe another sigh for her.—*She does not find in herself the least inclination towards me.* Was not that her provoking cold reply ? Oh the little forceress ! I wish I had hold of her. I'll write those freezing words on scrolls of paper, and wear them as the Jews did their phylacteries, as amulets against her insolent charms.—*Let her go, I'll think no more of her*—and yet she is
a charm-

a charming creature ! and so is Cecilia : those two sisters have often reminded me of Cowley's description of the two daughters of Saul. How is it ? for you are better acquainted with old Dan Cowley than I am—

The stately Merab, seems some regal tower,
 Michal, some virgin queen's delicious bower.—
 Ay, that same little Michal shall be my choice. I thank you for putting me in mind of her : there is something in the very name of Cecilia that conveys to me an idea of the blush and fragrance of opening roses, the pure unsullied whiteness of the lily, and all the glowing beauties of the spring ; for is she not herself the goddess of it ? Youth and health dance in her sprightly eyes, and *her* Cupids, instead of being spiteful urchins that delight in mischief, are good-humoured little laughing cherubs, whose harmless shafts tickle rather than wound. But after all, suppose (for it is good to suppose every thing within the laws of possibility) that this girl should, like her sister, take it into her head not to like me, what is to be done then ?
 for

for positively my affairs are in a *confounded* bad way. For between the roguery of my father's agent, who pretends (though I am sure I had not half the money) that he let me have near two thousand pounds, even before my father's death, and for which the old dog has since got a mortgage; between his knavery, I say, and my own little vagaries since, I owe above six thousand pounds, not to mention a charge on the estate of three thousand more for Harry; a heavy tax, Sophy, on poor twelve hundred a year, out of which too, you know, I pay my mother her jointure: think of this, my girl, and tremble for your poor brother's situation!

But now, after having supposed the worst, (after which nothing but a gulph opens before me, where *conjectural* will be swallowed up in *certain* destruction) let us suppose the best, and that Cecilia should not find in herself any *dis*-inclination towards me, how are we to conduct this affair to a happy issue? For my part I own, even spite of your's and my mother's management, that I foresee many difficulties in the way.

way. For let us grant that both the ladies like, or, if you will, *love* their men, is there not a wide difference with girls brought up as they have been, between *loving* without consent, and *marrying* without consent? If I meant nothing but a little amour, I should have better hopes of it; for, with reverence to chastity be it spoken, a lady may fall into such a scrape contrary to her intentions; and many a poor innocent has slipped unawares into the trap, where she has been content to stay, rather than like the silly mouse tear herself in endeavouring to get out: but this, you know, is out of the question, and I have at least the merit of being an *honourable* lover.

Yet after all, you women understand one another best, and know, I suppose, that if love and duty fall to wrestling in a female heart, which of the two is likeliest to have his heelstripped up. I do therefore commit this weighty affair to your wise direction, and own I think your conclusions are fairly drawn: for since Miss Arnold *does* love Falkland, though I could curse her for

doing so, the most probable means to promote our (for now you may call them *our*) designs, is to encourage her in it; therefore be sure, Sophy, you use your *fan* judiciously. For my part, if I can discover in Falkland's heart but a spark no bigger than the point of a needle, I'll apply an organ-bellows to it, till I have kindled such a flame, as shall light us both to happiness, or consume him in the conflagration. Yet I have no enmity to *him*, but on the contrary like him, and think him a very pretty fellow: but I assure you he would have been utterly spoiled, if he had remained another year under the tuition of that old drone Price; for you cannot imagine what chimerical notions he had put into the poor lad's head about the Lord knows what! but I hope to cure him of them by degrees, for there is a good *soil* there, though he has got some strange prejudices, by living so many years in such a *praying* family. We need not, however, I hope, be much afraid of his *scruples*, though he was wonderfully troubled with them when he first came to college,

lege, and used to blush like a young miss; but he has already pretty well got over that, for I have initiated him into a few mysteries, and purpose, at his return, to introduce him into our club, of which you have heard me make honourable mention: it will help to file off a little of that pedantic superstitious rust with which the old dryad of Woodberry-grove had incrustated his intellects: but I shall not be able to give him the last polish till I get him to London, which I purpose doing next vacation. Mean while, if we can bring about an eclaireissement between him and his love, I think our affair will be in a prosperous way, and I shall have nothing to do but commence my attack, when my little delicious bower returns from Burnly.

I never writ so long a letter in my life—Whuph! it is past two o'clock in the morning. Go to bed, Audley—Is it not a shame for a sober young fellow like you to be up so late?—

LETTER XII.

MISS AUDLEY TO SIR EDWARD AUDLEY.

Woodberry, 18th July.

AND so you will really condescend to take up with one of the finest girls in the kingdom, and one of the best fortunes ! *I'll e'en be content with Cecilia.*— I wish I could see the man that durst use such an expression towards me. Oh, the insolence of thy sex, Edward, the insincerity of it too ! for even *I*, who know you so well, was really deceived, and thought you enough in love to have made my task more difficult in persuading you to drop your pursuit of Miss Arnold ; yet in *this* instance I am glad you *were* a hypocrite, and am not so angry with you for imposing on me, as I am with myself for being imposed on. You frighten me with the account you give of the situation of your affairs ; bad enough I knew they were, but did not think them *quite* so bad as you represent them. You are a sad giddy

giddy creature, brother, to have let things run on thus far without thinking sooner of applying a remedy, indeed you are. So much for a grave rebuke, and now a word or two of comfort.

Miss Arnold received a letter from her mama yesterday. She ran to me with it open in her hand, her expressive features all lit up with joy. Your mama and your sister are coming home, I suppose, said I. She changed her countenance in an instant, and shaking her head, I wish they were, she replied, but they don't think of returning this month or six weeks. I thought by your joyful countenance, my dear, that we should have had them here in two or three days. No, she answered, folding the letter up to put it into her pocket, her cheeks glowing with blushes, I am only rejoiced to hear from them, and to find that——That what? Shew me the letter, Dolly; you brought it to me with that design, I am sure, what has altered your intentions? You are a strange girl, Miss Audley; I did bring it on purpose to shew you, and if I looked pleased, it was only

because my mama commended me. Commended you, for what, my dear? How can you be so teasing, Sophy? There—take the letter—She tossed it to me, and ran out of the room.

Mrs. Arnold says in it, ‘ I rejoice with
‘ you, my love, on the recovery of our
‘ Orlando, and thank you for your tender
‘ care of a life so precious to us all. In-
‘ deed I knew not how *very* dear he
‘ was to me, till convinced by my fears
‘ (with which my first hasty perusal of
‘ your letter had alarmed me) for his pre-
‘ servation. It was very prudent as well
‘ as very kind in Mr. Price to conceal the
‘ danger from me till it was past; I should
‘ certainly have flown to you on the in-
‘ stant I heard the news. Pray, do not
‘ suffer your brother to return to college
‘ till his strength is perfectly restored.
‘ Dolly, I wish for life only to see my
‘ children happy. Falkland is one of my
‘ children; there may be ties close as if
‘ knit by the hand of nature, and I have
‘ the same parental affection for this boy
‘ as if he were really my son. Had I been
‘ blessed

‘blessed with one, I should have wished
 ‘him just such a youth as Orlando.’
 She then proceeds to comfort her daughter in her present disagreeable situation, under the mortification of being absent from her mama and sister, added to the anxiety and trouble of attending a sick room.—Complains of the necessity she is under of remaining, according to her promise, five or six weeks longer with lady V—, on whose deep melancholy she expatiates, and which, she says, nothing but *her* conversation seems to alleviate. She tells Dolly she would send for her to Burnly, but that she thinks after the fatigue of mind and body which she has already undergone, that the dejection, which reigns in lady V—’s house would contribute to depress, rather than relieve her tender spirits; and adds, that if it were not for Cecilia’s constant cheerfulness and good humour, *she herself* could hardly support it. She concludes with telling her, that if lady Audley will be so good as to let Miss continue at Woodberry till her (Mrs. Arnold’s) return, she

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shall

shall take it as a particular favour, as she is sure my company will be a great consolation to her poor daughter.

I fancy, Edward, it will not be a very difficult matter to prevail on lady Audley to grant her this favour. Do you know that my mama had intended to have made the offer herself, she tells me so in a note I received from her this day; but I am glad she is anticipated. The proposal shall now come from Miss Arnold, and my stay shall be considered as a compliment. Is it not strange that Mrs. Arnold, so prudent, so cautious, and so penetrating as she seems to be, should so widely have mistaken the character and designs of a certain friend of ours? Poor woman, how blind these *very* good folks are! She has even now, without knowing it, struck the arrow (into a heart already pierced) at least an inch deeper than it was before! With what fondness does she express herself, with what warmth does she praise the already too much beloved Falkland! This was the part of her letter with which Dolly was so much delighted, and yet

yet the little simpleton would fain have persuaded *herself*, as well as me, that she was pleased only because her mother commended her. She entered the room soon after I had done reading the letter, the prettiest anxiety in the world in her face, and taking me by the hand, You'll stay with me, my dear Sophy, till my mama comes home? Sure lady Audley will be so kind as to indulge me with your company! No doubt, my dear, if you make the request in Mrs. Arnold's name, I will write to her ladyship immediately, replied she—you had a note from her to-day, I am afraid she recalls you home, and I shall be left quite alone! Do you reckon Mr. Falkland *nobody*? said I; I thought we had always allowed him to be *somebody*. She forced a reluctant smile, her cheeks again stained with crimson. He talks of going away this evening.—A sigh, which she endeavoured to suppress, divided the last word. And will you let him, Dolly? Does not your mama charge you not to suffer him to depart till he is perfectly recovered? Mr. Price says he is

very well, she answered, neither does he himself complain; I would not detain him for the world. How ridiculous are your scruples, my dear! mind what your mama says. I had Mrs. Arnold's letter still in my hand; I read over the whole paragraph relative to Falkland, I read it with good accent and good discretion. Oh, Edward, you can't imagine what advantage those few lines received from the noble energy with which I enforced Mrs. Arnold's favourable expressions! Agreeably as Dolly had been impressed by them before, they now operated with double force. *There may be ties close as if knit by the band of nature!* No doubt there may, said I, pausing, with a look as if I were considering.—There is something mysterious to me in these words—*I have the same parental affection for this boy, as if he were really my son; and had I been blessed with one, I should have wished him just such a youth as Orlando.*—Is it not in her power then, continued I, to give him the *relation* as well as the *name* of son? Mrs. Arnold can herself form *a tie close as if knit by the band of nature.*—

Ay,

Ay, it must be so—now I understand her meaning, and let me die if I don't think she herself wishes it at the bottom of her heart, though the cruel ill-grounded prejudices of the world have thrown a bar in the way, which your mama, from a way of thinking a little too much confined (pardon me the expression, Dolly) has not courage enough to leap over.—Suppose that she were to know that this Orlando, *so precious to you all*, is particularly so to *one* of her family, don't you think in that case so indulgent a mother——

Good God! interrupted Miss Arnold, clapping her hands before her face, whither are you running? You rave, Sophy, you talk of impossibilities! Oh no, no, no, say no more, say no more, I conjure you.—I saw the tears trickling down between her fingers. 'Tis the interest I take in what so nearly concerns your happiness, my dear Miss Arnold, said I, that makes me talk thus; can you be angry with me for wishing to see your heart at ease? Vain, vain wish! said she, drying her eyes, yet I thank you for it; I know

it proceeds from your love to me, (she threw one of her arms round my neck); yet I am sure, were you in my place, you would act just as I intend to do.—And how is that, my dear? To keep from all the world, except perhaps such a faithful friend as yourself, the knowledge of a secret which terrifies me every time I think of it.—And why terrify you, Dolly? Is there a crime in loving? Not in the thing itself, she replied; but to *me* 'tis the crime of our first parents, 'tis the sin of disobedience. Yet the forbidden fruit is so tempting, Dolly! positively, if I were not your friend, I should be your rival, for I do think Falkland a bewitching creature. What eyes the toad has! And yet (withdrawing her arm from my neck) *you* would not have him yourself, Miss Audley, were you circumstanced as I am. Upon my life I would, if I had such an independent fortune as you have. What, (with a look of surprize mingled with curiosity) contrary to your mama's approbation? I do not absolutely say that neither; I have as great a respect for parental

tal authority (and I kept my face admirably) as you can have, Miss Arnold, and therefore I should certainly *try* to obtain my mama's consent, and if she would not grant it, why then——Ay, what would become of you then, Miss Audley?—Why then, I think I should be very apt to marry him without it.—Mercy on me, Sophy, how madly you talk! but I am sure you are not serious.—Why no, in that case I believe I should be as much afraid to venture on such a step as you would, for I should think a parent's refusal of consent amounted to a prohibition, and I should look upon it as a downright act of rebellion in that child who should transgress such a prohibition. A stifled sigh which I saw lifting her gentle bosom at that word, encouraged me to proceed.—But I'll suppose matters situated with me, just as they are with you; I will suppose my mama to be as fond of Mr. Falkland as Mrs. Arnold is; I'll suppose that she has but one single objection to the giving him her daughter, that objection by no means to be charged on him as a fault, and that she herself would overlook it, if it were not
through

through fear of the censures of meddling impertinent people, and the resentment of an imperious brother: Thus circumstanced, I own I should not think it any great outrage against duty, if without hazarding a denial from my mother, I took the man I loved, and trusted to her tenderness to forgive a little trespass, which had not amounted to a breach of her commands. There was a little sophistry in this reasoning, Edward; I learnt that knack from you. Miss Arnold however saw it not, at least she was too much agitated by the tendency of my discourse to examine it. You talk of but *one* objection, said she; oh, Sophy, you don't know what you are saying! I know of none, said I, but the unlucky circumstance of poor Mr. Falkland's birth, which has been passed by in hundreds who have not half his merit; for with respect to his want of fortune, where there will be so considerable a one on your side, 'tis too mean a consideration to be balanced with so many good qualities, so many accomplishments, so amiable a person. Dear, dear Miss

Audley, *how* can you talk thus? Why is it not all true? I grant it; but indeed your kind zeal for me transports you beyond the bounds of reason; you forget that all this while, the man of whom we are speaking, never once dreamed of those chimeras which you have been conjuring up in your own imagination.—Ha, ha! and is *that* the rub then? Oh, child, it shall soon be removed, our bowls shan't be stopped by a straw.—You don't suppose, Edward, I said this to Dolly; have not you been corresponding with me long enough to know the difference between a little mental parler that I sometimes hold with myself, and a response made aloud? I answered Miss Arnold, He must be very insensible then, and I believe *that* is one of the last faults that we should suspect in Falkland's nature. No, Dolly, assure yourself, if he never did before, he must in this last visit have discovered enough of your sentiments to encourage his hope.

She shuddered when I said this, as one does at the sight of a little noxious animal to which we have an antipathy. Lord,
Miss

Miss Audley, how mean must I appear in your eyes! And if I should do so too in those of Mr. Falkland! — She clapped her hands together, Oh, Sophy, I am not a match for that reflection; I do not wish to be beloved; but indeed I could not bear to be despised.

Just as she spoke this we heard some one tap at the door, (we were in the garden parlour) May I come in, ladies? said Falkland, for it was he. Miss Arnold was too much discomposed to see him; she ran into the adjoining room, and I bid him come in.

I thought Miss Arnold had been with you, Madam, said he, and I came to bid you both good-bye. — You are not going away now, Sir? Yes, he replied, Mr. Price dines at Oxford to-day, and he thinks I may as well take the opportunity of going in the chariot with him, as defer it till evening when I purposed to have gone.

My zeal for your interests, Edward, made me cruel in that instant; I did an ill-natured thing, for without giving poor Dolly time to re-compose herself, I called her out of the other room, from whence, as the door stood on the jar, she had heard

what was said. She entered; I pitied her from my heart, for she looked as pale as death. Orlando took her kindly by the hand, What's the matter, my dear Arney? (for so he sometimes calls her) no ill news from Burnly, I hope! (he knew she had received a letter) how does your mama and Cecilia do? They are very well, she replied, but I am myself a little indisposed to-day. Poor Dotty, said Falkland, and slightly kissed one of her cheeks; this easy familiar action soon chased away the paleness from them. He looked earnestly at her, 'Tis your too close attendance on me, said he, that has made you ill; it were better a hundred such worthless fellows as I am should die, than that you should lose an hour's health. 'Tis only her want of sleep, said I; she will be well again in a day or two. I hope so, replied Falkland; I shall call on you again soon. Adieu, and pray be well against I see you next. Good morning to you, Miss Audley, have you any commands to Sir Edward? He made to each of us a graceful bow and retired, and we saw the chariot drive

drive away with him and Mr. Price in it presently after.

Poor Miss Arnold ! Lord ! Edward, it is a sad thing to be in love without being sure of a return, for that is at present our case : not that I can have the least doubt of Falkland's catching the flame if it be communicated by a skilful hand ; but to tell you the truth, I have not observed any thing in him which gives me room to believe he loves her ; yet I may be mistaken, and he may have art enough to conceal his inclinations, where there appears so little probability of their succeeding. She seems now glad that he is gone, and has besought me not to talk of him. In this I must conform to her desires, or perhaps forfeit her good opinion, without which nothing can be effected. It now rests upon you to make Falkland speak for himself, and I think I can answer for the consequences.

We are at present most intolerably humdrumish ; and if I were not the best sister in the universe, I should leave Dolly to read Homilies to old Price, and return home ;

home; though, by the way, my mama has *permitted* me (for we writ to her) to stay here till Mrs. Arnold's return.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

SIR EDWARD AUDLEY to Miss AUDLEY.

Oxford, July 20th.

VERY near sinking, by Jupiter! If I had not been a skilful seaman, and cried '*bout ship*' in an instant, we had gone sounce to the bottom! You have an excellent nose, Sophy, to use a sportsman's phrase, and can scent out a little lurking Cupid as well as my Basto can a hare. You were right with regard to Miss Arnold, you are right with regard to Falkland, for he not only does *not* love Dorothy; but as fortune in her spite would have it, he *loves* Cecilia! Thanks be to my better stars I am not dying for either of the puppits, yet I *will* have one of them; and since my heart has been so amenable

to

to me as to turn out Dolly to make room for Cecilia, why should not Falkland's be the same, and turn out Cecilia to make room for her elder sister? Ay, it must be so, the change is easy, and it will be so extremely convenient to us all, that I will have it so; but Falkland must not yet know my design, for on that depends its success, though I had like to have betrayed it, which would have blown us all up.

Have you ever seen two children at play, Sophy, delighted with the sports in which they were engaged, and galloping in full career round the room on hobby-horses? One of them, tired perhaps of his pastime, spies some toy that was put up on a shelf, probably to be out of both their reaches; he climbs to get possession of it, which the other brat no sooner perceives, than he immediately dismounts, and nothing will serve him but the identical bauble of his companion; he squalls for it directly, Waugh, Sir, it was mine first, and they fall instantly to scratching. Thus would it have fared between Falkland and me, had he discovered that I had any views with

with regard to Cecilia; for though he never yet entertained the most distant thought of possessing either of those girls, and considered them, like the toy on the shelf, as things entirely out of his reach; yet had he seen an adventurous rival stretch forth his arm to seize the prize, good-bye to hobby horses, nothing would serve him but my play-thing.

I'll tell you what passed between us yesterday. Falkland, said I, I am astonished that you who have had such opportunities have not endeavoured to carry off one of the Miss Arnolds. To carry off! said he, with some surprize. Ay, her heart I mean, cried I, for then you may be sure her person will soon follow. You are mistaken, Sir Edward, answered he; their mother has instilled into them such notions of perfection, that they hardly think themselves mortal women, and I dare say, nothing under a demi-god would be thought worthy of them. I laugh'd, and answered, Yet I will lay five hundred pounds, Falkland, that had I been under the same roof with them half as long as you have been,
one

one of them should have descended from her coelestial stilts, and been lady Audley by this time.

He paused a little, then asked me which of them would have been my choice? Cecilia, answered I, (possessed with a notion that Dolly *must* be his) Cecilia! he repeated eagerly, his face all in a flame. I quickly saw how the land lay, and with an inimitable presence of mind, Would she not be your's? cried I. I think her a much finer girl than her sister; the *youngest* is a mere baby face. He laughed now in his turn, and re-composing his features, Faith, Sir Edward, you startled me, said he; why the *youngest* is Cecilia, for whom, had I pretensions to *either* of them, I own I would give my life. I *could* love Cecilia dearly, and though I have hitherto stifled a hopeless flame, I find the thoughts of a rival would make it blaze out. There, Sophy, you see he gave proof to my simile.

Falkland, replied I, with a very serious countenance, I could tell you a secret that a certain little bird has whispered to me; but since I know your sentiments, I had better
better

better keep it to myself. What is it? prithee, tell it me. Poh, what does it signify, I'll only tell you that *I* would give a limb to be as happy a man as you are without your knowing your own good fortune—I'll never forgive you, Sir Edward, if you conceal it.—But I promised my sister not to speak of it.—And you never broke your promise to a lady? Ay, but this is a different case.—You may keep your secret, Sir Edward, but I shan't look upon you any longer as my *friend*. Suppose I should tell you that Miss Arnold loves an insensible blind fellow that never once thought of her! He appeared thunder-struck. Miss Arnold! do you mean Dolly or Cecilia, for you don't seem to know one from the other? I mean her whom my sister is now with, she who I think the handsomest, Dolly, if that be her name. Why you amaze me, Sir Edward! What did Miss Audley say to you? Coxcomb, said I, you want to indulge your vanity now, by hearing at second hand the soft confessions of one of the finest creatures in the universe. No, replied he, for upon my word (*I can* not yet get him to swear a little decently) if

if you are serious in what you say, I am extremely sorry for it. Oh could you but have told me this of Cecilia! 'Tis a pity, cried I, that *both* the girls are not in love with you; why what a tyrant art thou, Falkland? for if that were the case, one of them *must* be unhappy.—You mistake me, answered he; I only wish that Cecilia had for me those sentiments which you say her sister has; for then—What then, Falkland? Why then perhaps both you and I——but it is all madness to think of it. We can neither of us pretend to them, your *fortune* does not intitle you; and for my part, born as I am under an anathema, I never durst entertain a hope. I have a thousand obligations to Mrs. Arnold, and I should think it a violation of the laws of gratitude and hospitality, should I endeavour to seduce the heart of her daughter.

I did not like this strain, Sophy, it favoured too much of old Price. Yet, said I, you wished but now, that Cecilia had for you those sentiments that her sister has. I fancy in that case, Falkland, you would

would make a little free with the laws of hospitality. At present you are mightily inclined to impose on yourself for *virtue*, what is in reality nothing more than *indifference*. Suppose it were Cecilia who loved you, would you not hazard every thing, forfeit every thing to possess her? I dare not trust myself with the thought! said he. That answers me fully, replied I; where then is the difference between breaking through forms (for that would be *the very head and front of your offending*) with a view to gratify your own passion, and the doing so in order to make a grateful return to that of a fair lady? In one case, said he, the temptation would be some excuse. And in the other, cried I, the motive would be a much better. I admire Miss Arnold, said he, I love, I esteem her; yet I never considered her in the light you mention. Cecilia had early possession of my inclinations, and I had always thought she loved me better than her sister did. This it was perhaps which helped to conciliate my affections more to her. You see how wrong a judgment you

formed, answered I; you were led into this error for want of being better acquainted with the female heart. Cecilia, who felt nothing more for you than friendship, or at most a *sisterly* love, gave full scope to those feelings, and as she had no reason to hide, she let you see *all* that passed in her heart. Poor Dolly, on the contrary, conscious that she felt more for you than she dared to avow, was always on her guard, and for fear of discovering the *whole*, perhaps concealed more than she needed to have done.

I believe you are right, said he; a thousand little circumstances now occur to me, which convince me that you are. There was something very particular in Miss Arnold's behaviour when I took my leave of her yesterday. Poor girl, what a pity! — What a pity indeed, cried I, that she should love an insensible puppy that does not deserve her! and I swore a furious oath at him. What would you have me do, cried he, would it not be basely betraying Miss Arnold to pretend a passion which I do not feel? And would it not also be betraying
my

my own interests, for in that case I must forever give up all thoughts of Cecilia? Dolt, cried I, have you any *hopes* of her? At present not the least, answered he, yet time might do something in my favour. I build much on Mrs. Arnold's tenderness for me; and were Cecilia to favour my wishes, I think I should even venture to disclose them to her mother.—And be sure of a disappointment, interrupted I; no, no, Falkland, though a heart in love may overlook a thousand inequalities, a parent's cooler judgment never can.—Would there not then, said he, be the same difficulty with regard to one sister as to the other? Undoubtedly, cried I, if the mother were to be consulted on the occasion.—He was thoughtful for a while, then repeated with a sigh, Poor Miss Arnold!

I dropp'd the conversation here, not thinking it convenient at that time to urge the subject farther.

I have studied Falkland minutely since I have been acquainted with him, and find he is of a very mixed character. The father and the mother pretty equally blended

in his composition ; but I hope the latter may predominate, else even under *my* prudent guidance and example, he may sneak out of the world without *doing* any thing worthy of remembrance. 'Tis harder to delineate the traces of this young man's mind, than of any one's I have ever yet known. I have sometimes thought this proceeded from the same cause that extremely delicate faces are the hardest to be drawn. He has no strong lines in his soul, and if I may use the expression, all the features of it are faint. I do not think him capable of a manly or steady friendship towards one of his own sex, or of a violent or constant attachment towards one of your's ; yet is he the most engaging and agreeable companion in the world amongst men, and would, (to a woman) I dare say, appear a warm and sincere lover. He likes pleasure, yet enters not into it with that juvenile ardour so natural to one of his age ; he even sometimes commits excesses, but it seems as if he were led into them more from the force of example, than the strength of his passions. He is at times idle without being

ing dissipated, and at others busy without being studious. He will deny no favour that you can ask of him; yet he appears not much obliged for those which are granted to him. In short, he does the best and the worst things with equal indifference. He loves expence, yet he by no means despises money; and I have seen him generous and niggardly in the same hour; hasty in forming resolutions, and as ready to break them. He has an infinite deal of vanity; but he has still more art in concealing it, and I believe that I am the first who ever discovered that he had either. With all this he has very good sense, and an address insinuating beyond any thing I ever met with. His faults seem all complexional, so are his virtues too, for he is neither right nor wrong upon principle, and it appears a moot point whether nature intended him for an angel or a devil. Such is the subject I have to work upon. His old tutor (whom, he says, he believes to be as good a man as Abraham was) has endeavoured to instill into him all his patriarchal notions; a few of them have stuck

by him, and it has cost me a good deal of pains to root out others; but I must clear the ground entirely of weeds, for such I consider prejudices of all kinds, and then I think I can sow it with what seeds I please.

When he first came to college he was very untowardly, and, to say the truth, I had not much hopes of him. Nay still, spite of all my digging and hoeing and raking, a weed now and then pops up; he relapses into his absurd opinions, and this he calls a return to *virtue*; but this is generally after a night's debauch, when finding perhaps his head ach next morning, he *declares* he'll never drink again; shuts himself up in his chamber for three days, and I verily believe says his prayers. I commonly let those penitential fits work off; as I would those of an ague, and then I apply my remedy; by which means I hope in time to effect an absolute cure. His conscience seems to be troubled with an intermitting fever, but I perceive already the returns of it are less frequent, and the paroxysms of a shorter duration.

I

I do not wonder that Mrs. Arnold has a high opinion of him; persons who are endowed with a plausible exterior, and who are not agitated by violent passions, may impose on more discerning eyes than generally fall to the share of ingenuous minds. Let this account for what you seem so much surprized at in your last letter, viz. that Mrs. Arnold, with all her penetration, could never see into the character and designs of a *certain friend* of ours; whom, in all companies, she declares to be the *best* of women! Don't you know that old Price is her almoner to dispose of all her little private charities? Then his conversation is *so* edifying! Lord, what would *she* give to have such a worthy divine under the same roof with her! 'Tis true her ladyship has the misfortune of having a rakehell young fellow to her son, but what then? The worthiest of parents may have wild children; besides, Sir Edward is very young, he *may* reform, and yet make an excellent man. Oh, no doubt, if it pleases heaven to make such a reformation.— Mean while poor lady Audley *discountenances*

him as much as possible, and even very rarely allows him to visit her. Such a conduct may be thought somewhat rigorous by tender mothers, 'tis true, but for *her* part she should always prefer her *duty* to her feelings.—Now, Sophy, do you wonder any longer? But to return to our own affairs. I think 'tis meet that Miss Arnold should be persuaded that Falkland loves her. You are very good at starting a hint, but I am your only operator to improve upon it. I therefore send you a pretty maidenly epistle inclosed, which you may let your friend see in whatever manner your discretion shall direct. You must in return write me a letter fit for Falkland's eye. I will not affront your sagacity by enlarging on the utility of this step; I shall only remind you that it will give me an opportunity of renewing a conversation, which I could not well be the first to re-assume, without creating some suspicions of a design.—Sophy, I must succeed in this affair, or I am *undone*, that's all.

LETTER XIV.

(Which was inclosed in the preceeding.)

YOU reproach me, my dear Sophy, for absenting myself from Woodberry. Falkland was punctual in delivering to me your menaces; but you ought rather to commend my caution than to blame my coldness. I love you, and I respect Miss Arnold; but I owe something to my own peace, and therefore think it prudent not to indulge inclination where hope is forbid. The unhappy, they say, find relief in the society of those who are as miserable as themselves; if this be so, I have at least one consolation, for I find I am not the only wretch who must sigh in vain. Your tyrant friend *has* a lover, though perhaps she little suspects it, of whom the proudest of her sex might boast! but he shall never grace her triumphs. Hopeless of success, he has hitherto wisely concealed his love; nor should even I have discovered it, if I had not made him the confidant of my own; then it was he frankly acknowledged himself to

be a fellow sufferer. Sophy, I trust you with a secret that you must not let transpire. Falkland, poor Falkland (easy and chearful as you have always seen him) pines in secret for that ——— I won't call her names, yet I could hate her for her hypocrisy. Yes, Sophy, she is a hypocrite, for who that looks in her face would think her cold or insensible? Yet I do not so much blame *her*, as I do Mrs. Arnold. Her mistaken zeal for the preservation of Falkland's morals, has exposed his heart to inevitable evil. How was it possible for him *not* to love, and is it not next to a miracle that he is not beloved again? I own to you fairly, had I known the state of his heart sooner, Miss Arnold should never have enrolled *my* name amongst the list of her slaves.

Had he hopes of success, I should envy, and perhaps love him less; but I could not be villain enough to endeavour to supplant him, as I consider his claim as of elder birth than my own. At present we have nothing to do but to sit down and condole with each other; yet I wish
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I could persuade him to follow my example, and by diverting his thoughts with other objects, try to turn them from that which now so much engrosses them; but he is a romantick fool, so I must leave him to his fate. For my part, I intend to give myself but another week to whine like a driveller. I will then, like a fierce demoniac, snap my chains at once, exorcise the demon Love to quit mine and take possession of some other devoted breast, leaving me free to make a happier choice. Oh, how I shall exult when I can cry out,

Do'st see that piece of beauty there,
 How *unregarded* now it passes?
 There *was* a time when I did swear
 To that alone——

Ah, Sophy, join with your brother in praying for this propitious hour to arrive; so may your gentle bosom never feel the pains of unrequited love.—— E. A.

LETTER XV.

MISS AUDLEY TO SIR EDWARD AUDLEY.

Woodberry, July 24th.

CHARMING creature ! incomparable brother ! how I envy you the glory of your contrivance ! It *ought* to have been *mine* ; 'tis too good for any *man* living. Had there been a word more, or a word less, it would not have done : had you treated Miss Arnold with more decorum, or been more guarded in your expressions, it would not have done : had you used more freedom, it would not have done ; for then I could not have let her see your letter ; but you mixed your ingredients to a nicety : yet with all your skill, it still would not have done, if it had not been for my dexterity in the application ; for let a recipe be ever so well prepared, there may be a little skill necessary in administering the potion, or the patient may lose the good effects of it.

I have taken three days to answer your *maidenly* epistle, as you call it ; (very maidenly
only

only it is, no doubt, because you did not swear in it) for, you must know, Dolly did not see it till this very day, as I have been ever since I received it pondering with myself in what manner I could best communicate it to her. Falkland's *name* was not to be mentioned : I could not, therefore, infringe this her *command*, without her really being, or affecting to be, displeased at it ; and this might have produced some consequences not at all desirable.

You see, therefore, your letter must have been abruptly introduced, under an apparent breach too of the confidence you reposed in me. Chance sometimes does for us what neither our own industry nor art could effect. I actually dropped your letter without any design, and Dolly, by the luckiest hazard, picked it up on the stairs, where I had flung it out of my pocket with my handkerchief in going down. She brought it to me directly, folded up as it was. I no sooner cast my eyes on it, than knowing it to be yours, a mixture of surprize and joy made the colour mount up to my eyes, and, without knowing

knowing what I did, I snatched it eagerly from her. So unaffected a confusion could not fail of creating some suspicion. Ah, Sophy, cried Miss Arnold, I see we are not upon equal terms; you have secrets which you conceal from me. You think this is from a lover, replied I; indeed, my dear, you are mistaken; 'tis only from my brother.—Why that blush then, Sophy? why that keen impatience to have it restored? Because, said I, (affecting a little of that embarrassment which I really felt before) because - - - - - look, this is his hand on the superscription.—Because: - - - because - - - said she, smiling, how should I know Sir Edward's hand? I'll shew you his name at the bottom, at least the two first letters of it. I unfolded the letter; she observed the verses: Poetry, as I live! ah, little dissembler, 'tis not from your brother—See his name at the bottom—There may be more E. A.'s than Sir Edward Audley; you could not have been so agitated, had it come from him. I made her look at the conclusion, doubling down the other part. She read, *The pains of un-*

requited love. Sophy, this cannot be from your brother. Why not, Dolly? has he not reason to complain of a certain person? This seemed to recover her from her doubts. I dare say, said she, he is very severe upon me in it, which made you so unwilling that I should see it: prithce tell me what he says; for I can take nothing ill of such a mad-cap. Well, said I, if you will promise not to be angry, I will shew it to you; though my brother would never forgive me, were he to know it. I put it into her hands. She saw by the date it had been written three days; and her manner of finding it, joined to my behaviour, left her not the least room to suspect there was any artifice in the case.

She read it attentively. Here was a copy, Edward, to have exercised a painter's skill; her ingenuous countenance speaking all the various passions of her soul. He is right, said she, perfectly right, with a composed look and voice, as she read the first paragraph of your letter; yet I should always be glad to see Sir Edward as a friend. I watched her as she proceeded to the
next,

next, where you say, *The unhappy find relief*, &c. and I heard her breathe a sigh, in pity even of thee, thou traitor. Indeed, I am very sorry, said she, her soft eyes still *more* softened by compassion, at the thoughts of your pretended sufferings. But now came the touch-stone, *Your tyrant friend has a lover*, &c. I saw surprize, curiosity, and impatience take possession of every feature; she seemed to devour the lines with her eyes: but when the name of *Falkland* struck them, what a glow then brightened her face! A blush is too poor a word; I never saw her look so beautiful! Good God, said she, can this be possible! She paused a little, her eyes beaming with lustre. She read on—A hypocrite, does Sir Edward call me? how much does your brother wrong me in his opinion! Sophy, you know I am neither *cold* nor *insensible*. She returned to your letter; Poor Falkland! dear Orlando! broke involuntarily from her lips. Sir Edward blames my mama here, continued she; but how could she foresee, that in her pious care of an unhappy orphan, she

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was

was laying up misery for him, and her weak imprudent daughter? Yet I have heard her say, that there was a fatality attended all her actions, and that her best designs had been perverted into evil. It will be her own fault, said I, if this should be rendered so. She only shook her head; when coming to the conclusion of your letter, she smiled, and said, she loved you for your spirit in resolving to think no more of her; adding, that she was very sure you would not find it difficult to keep your resolution. I replied, My brother has a very vulnerable heart; at the same time he is so volatile, that I should not be surprized if I were to see him in love with some one else in a month or two; (I said this by way of a little preparatory step for your attack on Cecilia) yet, continued I, were he to meet a kind return, I know it would fix him; and the plains of Arcadia never saw a tenderer or a more constant swain than Sir Edward might then be made. There was a pretty speech for you! I hope, replied Miss Arnold, he may then soon meet with a lady who will deserve and
return

return his affection. But let me now ask you one question, Sophy ; Have you written to your brother since you received this letter ? I saw the tendency of her question, and was prepared with an answer ; yet I hesitated as if I were not. Have you written to Sir Edward ? she repeated—— I have—Sophy, I fear, I fear you put too much confidence in that brother of yours ; yet, if you have betrayed my secret !—— I clasped my arms suddenly about her neck—Dolly, I can't deceive you, yet I *must* be forgiven ; I will not let loose my hold, till you promise me your pardon. What have you done ? cried she eagerly ; tell me quickly. I have trusted my brother, said I, with a secret which I myself discovered. I am lost then ! cried she, flinging from me, and throwing herself into another chair ; Falkland by this time knows it all ! 'Twas barbarous in you, Sophy ; would I have used you so ? My brother will not mention it, said I ; I charged him strictly on that head. Oh, ridiculous supposition ! cried she ; do you think that *men* have more virtue than *we* have ?

have? Don't you see that your friendship for me got the better of your fidelity to your brother, and you communicated to me what he charged you to conceal! I seemed to be struck dumb with this reproach, and the truth of the observation—but recovering myself; He has not the same reasons to excuse a breach of trust, nor the same motives for committing it. I was overcome by your importunities; and had you not found and pressed to see my brother's letter, I should never have mentioned Falkland to you more. The same accident cannot befall Sir Edward; what inducement then can he have to betray me? This flimsy apology was (as I meant it should be) very easily answered. Friendship for Falkland, replied she: he loves him, and will be very glad of an opportunity of telling him what he thinks will make him happy—Again I stood in amaze at her sagacity! but still willing to excuse my fault, I am extremely sorry, said I, that I should have been so imprudent; but I don't know how it is, I never *could* keep any thing from my brother—

And

And I spoke it in the tone of one who is ashamed of their own absurdity.

“To what have you exposed me! cried she, clasping her hands together; how shall I bear to look Falkland in the face, after such an indiscreet, such an *unsolicited* confession? Had he remained ignorant of my weakness, time and my own endeavours, joined to a belief of *his* indifference, would have enabled me to overcome it; but now what hope have I left? If Falkland, encouraged by what I am sure he knows too well, should venture to declare himself, I am undone! Sophy, you know not what thorns you have planted here—and she laid her hands on her bosom. Accept of my penitence, my dear Miss Arnold, said I, and hope for the best. I was really affected with the account my brother gave me of poor Falkland’s situation: I thought *he* was so too; and (as he had no hopes himself) that the knowledge of this secret would, far from creating any jealousy in him, rather be a consolation, when he reflected that it was not an *unworthy* rival to whom you gave the preference. Come, prithee,

prithce, my dear, dry your eyes (for I perceived tears in them) you are the first woman, I believe, that ever cried for finding herself adored by the man she loved. I don't weep for *that*, said she, but to think how unhappy we must *both* be. Had I suffered alone; but poor Orlando—must be your husband after all, Dolly. She smiled through her tears, and sobbed out, A---h, Sophy, that's impossible! A good deal more of pretty girlish chit-chat passed between us, to the same purpose, till we were called down to supper, where Mr. Price's presence was a check to any farther conversation on the subject.

The family are all, long since, retired to bed; and here am I, like a witch, scrawling dire characters at midnight. My chamber joins that where Miss Arnold sleeps; but where she *sleeps* not at present, for I hear her sighing. These very reserved girls, I have observed, when they *do* love, love unmercifully. We lively ones, with a little dash of the coquet in us, are mere babies to them. Another sigh! Oh, Edward, the potion operates rarely!

Well,

Well, but all this while Falkland steps not forward to meet us. We are prepared for him here; and I shall have but a poor opinion of your abilities, if I do not very soon see a pair of *mutual* lovers. If you can once bring him to unfold his heart a little, Dolly's will expand of itself, and we may trust to sympathy to do the rest; but it will be absolutely necessary to engage him in the pursuit of this amour before Cecilia's return. Once entered, he cannot retract; and the reception he will be sure to meet with, must infallibly fix him: for after all (putting romance out of the question) I believe he would bless his stars to get either of these girls.

I take it for granted he has not the least suspicion that you ever made any overtures to Miss Arnold; on which account, nothing will appear more natural than that you should urge *him*, already so much favoured, to lay hold on his good fortune; besides, the indifference you expressed towards Cecilia, will put him off his guard there too; so that it will be impossible for doubts of any kind to awaken his jealousy:
and

and once there comes to be a reciprocation of vows between him and his love, (for that, I expect, will soon be the case) he cannot be such a snarling cur as to stand between you and a good to which he has given up all pretensions. Dolly, on the other hand, very probably, will not be sorry to see her sister in the same predicament with herself. We are all Eves, brother, and are ready to stretch out the apple to our friends of which we ourselves have tasted. You know Mrs. Arnold thinks her daughters as safe with my mama as with herself; we shall, therefore, have many opportunities, after they return from Burnly, of making little parties at our own house, till the time appointed for the young ladies going to London; and as you mean to quit the university at Christmas, you may pursue your mistress the whole winter in town; for I count upon your having secured her heart before she leaves Woodberry. I am quite tired with writing so long a letter; yet I will not go to bed till I have scribbled a short one for Falkland to see. It will require no management in the world

to

to shew it to him, but all the skill of which you are master to make it produce proper effects. You will have it inclosed; so adieu——

P. S. The servant who brings you this attends Mrs. Nelson to town; who having ten thousand things to buy, it will take her up almost the whole morning; so that you may order him to call on you before he returns home; and by that time, perhaps, you may be able to tell me how my billet worked.

LETTER XVI.

(Which was inclosed in the preceding.)

TIS almost a fortnight since I have seen you, and yet you are within five short miles of me. Indeed, brother, you are very unkind, and I almost begin to think you have no affection for me. You ought to consider the melancholy life I lead here: I see no body but a few primitive people,

people, whom Mrs. Arnold has selected for her acquaintance. As for poor Dolly, she is become such a mope, that she is really fit company for no one but herself; and if I did not love her dearly, I would not sacrifice my hours to her. Poor dear creature! I pity her from my heart.

Upon my word, Edward, I begin to be seriously alarmed for her; for I think her health is daily impairing. Would to God, she had never known a certain friend of yours, or that he was in a situation that would take off all objections to him; but as that is never likely to be the case, if you have any regard to the peace of the family in which I now am, or set any value on my friendship, take care never to let drop the smallest hint of what I intrusted to your confidence; for if any improper consequences should ensue (as no doubt there would) I should certainly be suspected by Mrs. Arnold as an abettor in her daughter's imprudence; for I know not to what lengths Dolly's unconquerable attachment might carry her, if Falkland were to know and avail himself of it.

Her mama talks of sending for her to Burnly, as she knows not when she shall be able to disengage herself from lady V—. I wish she would, as it would at the same time help to divert *her* mind, and deliver me from a confinement of which I am quite tired. Dolly does not seem to relish the thoughts of going; but I have a great inclination to get my mama to write to Mrs. Arnold to send for her. She need only be told of that melancholy which is preying on her mind, to hurry her away directly. She will attribute it, no doubt, to her being, for the first time, absent from her friends. How much does poor Miss Arnold envy that little sprightly gipsy Cecilia! Mrs. Arnold says she is the life of the whole family at Burnly; and that her constant flow of spirits supports those of her mama, as well as of Mrs. and Miss Darnley. Happy girl! she is a stranger to that tyrant who commits such ravages in the bosom of her poor sister.

For Heaven's sake, Edward, send me some books, and some news. Tell me who and who's together at Oxford: pick up

up all the anecdotes you can get, both good and bad, cram them into your budget, and empty the contents of it at Woodberry within these eight and forty hours, or thou art no brother of mine; though, for the present, I will subscribe myself

Your affectionate sister,

S. A.

LETTER XVII.

SIR EDWARD AUDLEY TO MISS AUDLEY.

Oxford, July 25th.

NOW, by Saint Paul, the work goes bravely on—I was in bed when I received your packet; and having read the great letter and the little letter, (the precious engine of our designs) I bethought me of a curious expedient, which I instantly put in practice. I bounded out of bed, threw on my night-gown and slippers, and having nicely picked off the seal from your inclosed billet, I as nicely clapped on a fresh one; then giving it to

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David,

David, I bid him follow me in a quarter of an hour to Mr. Falkland's chambers, and give it to me there. Have not you it already, Sir, said David, what occasion is there for my bringing it to you again? Do as I bid you, you dog, and ask no questions. I then sauntered into Falkland's room, whom I found just up. Give me some coffee, quoth I, and threw myself into his easy chair. Just as we began our breakfast, David entered, and with a very grave face, and a low bow, presented me your letter; but thinking himself in a plot, he could not refrain from tipping me a sly wink, which it was happy for the repose of his bones that Falkland did not observe. Having read it, I tossed it down carelessly on the table. *An Italian scrawl*, said Falkland, looking at the lines backwards; *which* of them is it from? (for I have other ladies who write to me besides you, Sophy.) If you have any curiosity, said I, you may read it; for the mischief is done already, and cannot be made worse by a farther communication. He took the letter up, and I could observe by the rogue's face

face as he read, that his vanity was not a little flattered. He rose from his chair without speaking, and walked up as it were mechanically to the glass, where having taken a survey of his own dear irresistible figure; You can't imagine, said he, turning round with a very solemn face, how much I am affected with this account which your sister gives of poor miss Arnold. I wish indeed, as miss Audley says, that we had never known each other. It would have been happy for *her*, said I, tossing off my dish of coffee; but I hope her mother will send for her into Lancashire, and by way of curing her melancholy, clap up some hasty match for her, as old lady Bidulph did for Mrs. Arnold. How I should laugh at you, Falkland, if we were to see her return a bride! Poh, cried he, how can you jest upon so serious an occasion? I would not for the world that any constraint should be laid on poor miss Arnold's inclinations; but I am sure her mama is too fond of her, and has besides too much humanity to be capable of exercising any tyranny towards her children. I would not

trust to that, said I, if her mama were to know how *wisely* her daughter has bestowed her heart; and if my mother should pick the secret out of Sophy, (who by the bye has not the gift of retention) she would think herself bound in duty to tell it. Then the old gray noddles at Burnly (lady V—'s and Mrs. Darnley's I mean) would be laid together to prevent the *mischief*, as they would call it, and they would be for giving their musty advice to Mrs. Arnold, who, good woman as she is, would, I believe, as you observe, were she left to herself, be far from acting tyrannically. Then we should have Sir George Bidulph, with his overbearing insolence, blustering all the poor women into a state of petrefaction; and lady Sarah, screwing up her mouth, would be *astonished* how a young person *allied* as her niece is, could forget herself so far as to condescend——Hold, Sir Edward, cried Falkland, stop where you are. Fortune has indeed cast me beneath miss Arnold, in depriving me of the inheritance of my ancestors, else where's the mighty difference? I believe the name of
Falkland

Falkland is at least as respectable as that of Arnold, and perhaps Bidulph into the bargain. Doubtless, said I; I was not speaking my own sentiments, but those of lady Sarah, who you know is one of the proudest women in England. Curse her pride! cried he. With all my heart, said I, (glad to hear the lad utter so sensible a sentence.) I despise it, continued he, as much as I do the arrogance of her husband, who always affected, even in my childhood, to treat me as a wretch whom his sister's charity preserved from perishing; but there may come a day of retaliation. I wish, said I, for I hate Sir George most cordially, that both the girls would run away with two such idle fellows as you and I; I think that would mortify him completely, for I know he will be for clapping a coronet on each of them, merely for the pleasure of saying, My niece lady such-a-thing, though the title were lady Beelzebub.

I saw Falkland was full of indignation; he walked backwards and forwards two or three times, then taking up your letter

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again,

again, which still lay on the table, and running it over a second time, And so, said he, *miss* Cecilia is the life of the family at Burnly. I wish she would spare a little of her vivacity to her poor sister. The *miss* was emphatical, and I perceived he was nettled at the judicious hint which you threw in with regard to Cecilia's happy indifference.

But what is the meaning, Sir Edward, said he, that you don't go and see *miss* Audley? I think she really has reason to complain of you. Why truly, Falkland, answered I, I don't think a *sister* an inducement quite strong enough to turn a man from more agreeable engagements. If I had the same motives for visiting there that you have, probably she would have less cause to complain. Ay, but compassion, Sir Edward; suppose we were to go to Woodberry this afternoon, just to ask the ladies how they do? With all my heart, said I, yawning and stretching myself out almost at full length in the arm-chair.—What time shall we go? said he. Oh, when you will; about five o'clock, I suppose.—
Falkland,

Falkland, will you lend me this book? pointing to a collection of poems that stood on the chimney-piece.

I left him here; and now, Sophy, you may expect to see Falkland at the above-mentioned hour; but not your humble servant you may depend on it. Your messenger has just this minute called on me, so I hurry him off with a heap of trumpery pamphlets for a blind; but remember I expect a good account of this same visit.

LETTER XVIII.

Miss AUDLEY to Sir EDWARD AUDLEY.

Woodberry, July 25th.

EDWARD, I am not amorous enough to enter into the spirit of a love scene, and had any eclairsissement been brought about, I should have laid down my pen in despair, for I would not attempt to describe the sublime folly of a pair of happy lovers met together. I shall however, I think, be able to paint the mo-

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derately

derately silly scene that passed here this evening. Trust not to Falkland's representation, but take it from my faithful hand.

He arrived here a little before six. Miss Arnold and I were sitting at work in her dressing-room. Mr. Price, according to custom, gone to take his evening's nap. We heard Orlando coming up stairs, talking to, and caressing Miss Arnold's little lap-dog, who had ran to meet him. There's Mr. Falkland, said I; Dolly turned pale, and instantly took out her smelling-bottle, which I believe prevented her from fainting. The footman threw open the door, and in darted the triumphant varlet, blooming as a cherub; the wind as he rid had heightened his colour and blown his aubourn hair about his cheeks; he really looked insufferably handsome. Poor Dolly made him a very low curtsie, unable to speak. He addressed me first, then advancing to her with something in his air that I never observed before; I hope, ma'am, you are perfectly recovered from your indisposition since I
saw

saw you last? *Madam* was a new expression. She answered in the same strain, I am much better, Sir, only to-day I have had a little return of the head-ach. Falkland looked earnestly at her; her conscious eyes, unable to meet his, were cast down to the ground. He took the work she was doing out of her hand; (it was a purse which she intended for him) Extremely pretty, he said it was, so well fancied! but would not working make her head worse? and he held it behind his back. It is for you, said I, that she is so busily employed. For me, my dear creature! then I insist on your laying it by, at least that you do no more of it whilst I am here. Miss Arnold blushed excessively; but suffered him to put her work into a little basket that lay on the window. He did this with that sort of authority which a man assumes even in trifles where he knows he has power. Dolly looked exceedingly silly, having nothing now to take off her attention from Falkland. He said he should be obliged to her for a dish of tea, and she flew to ring the bell with

an alacrity which shewed her readiness to prevent, if possible, his smallest wish.

I enquired after you: He is a sad lazy fellow, said Falkland; I proposed to him that we should both wait on you together this evening, and he promised to come with me; but when the appointed hour arrived, no Sir Edward was to be found: I suppose some vagary came across him, which made him forget his engagement.

The tea was brought up, which a little relieved Miss Arnold from the awkwardness of her situation, as it afforded her something to do; but how different was this from our former little parties! Nothing entertaining, nothing instructive, nothing even lively was said of either side; in short, neither of them spoke a word of common sense, a visible constraint chained both their tongues; and Falkland who has as much vivacity, and Dolly who has as good an understanding as any one, appeared each under greater disadvantages than ever I saw them. Yet I could perceive that Falkland was not inattentive to his deportment; (what designing wretches
you

you men are!) the creature contrived to be amiable in every attitude into which he threw himself, and when their eyes happened to encounter, he had the impudence to blush; ay, the *impudence*, for it was not modesty; while, on the contrary, the answering vermilion that mantled in the cheeks of Miss Arnold, was laid on by the innocent hand of bashfulness. He asked, Was there any hopes of Mrs. Arnold's speedy return? No, Dolly replied, she can't yet leave poor lady V—; my mama is to be pitied in so melancholy a situation. Your sister must have but a dull time of it, said the sly toad, over-doing the thing from a conscious knowlege of what I had written to you on that head. I should have thought so too, said Dolly; but my mama writes me word that Cecilia's constant chearfulness is the only resource which supports my mama's own spirits. This was a most fortunate reply. Falkland was silent for a little while, then with an expression in his looks, which said in plain English, *I know you love me, and I am almost inclined to return it*, he answered,

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swered,

swered, Some people are happy through insensibility ; I wish I could change hearts with Cecilia. A sort of a half sigh which he blew away, conveyed even more than he spoke. Whether this was drawn from him at the thoughts of Cecilia's indifference, or through compassion for her sister, I can't pretend to say.

Dolly's confusion was too apparent to be concealed ; she leaned her head on one of her hands, resting her fine turned arm on the tea-table, her eyes half closed ; and I thought that Falkland gazed at her with a mixture of tenderness, gratitude, and pity. This seemed a lucky crisis, and I thought might be productive of something, if a third person were not present. I rose from my chair. Where are you going ? cried Miss Arnold, starting from her reverie. Only for some thread to finish my work, said I, (for I had pretended to be fiddling at it all the time we were at tea.) Pray, my dear, work no more this evening, said she, let us go and take a turn in the garden. I must go for my hat then, I replied. She looked embarrassed,

raised, as if afraid of being left alone with Falkland; and rising up, said she also would go for her's, and accordingly followed me out of the room.

What's your opinion, said she, taking me by the arm as we entered my chamber, has your brother been faithful to you or not? I know not, I replied; but of thus much I am sure, that Falkland has betrayed the lover more than once this evening. I thought so too, answered she, Oh, Sophy, where, where will this end? In your mutual happiness I hope, my dear, Oh, no, which ever way I cast my eyes, happiness has turned her back upon me, Sophy, I charge you never leave me when Falkland comes to visit us, for I tell you once more, I have no security but in his silence. I wish my mama would return, or send for me to Burnly; 'twere better, I were in my grave than that I should overturn the hopes and the peace of my whole family.

When we went back to the room where we had left Falkland, we found Mr. Price with him. They had entered upon some

literary subject, in which the pupil seemed to acquit himself very much to the satisfaction of his tutor. The old man joined us in our walk into the garden, so that nothing more to the purpose passed for the rest of the afternoon; only I could observe that Falkland in bidding Miss Arnold adieu, looked——I don't know how; but not as he used to do.

Old Price entertained us with his praises all supper-time, and Dolly seemed so delighted, I thought two or three times she would have kissed the old man.

Edward, if this affair should turn out unfortunately, I should never forgive myself for the part I have acted in it; for next to your happiness I really wish that of poor Miss Arnold. Yet at worst, I cannot see any great harm that can ensue, but a little *fracas* in the Arnold family; and if they should be so obstinate as never to take her into grace again, she has a fortune in her own power sufficient to make her happy with the man she loves.

As for Cecilia, if you can win her affections, which I am partial enough to
you

you to think very probable, I believe you would not find it difficult to obtain her. She loves gaiety, and, by the bye, is a little weary of restraint; and one thing I am sure of, as she has more spirit than her sister, she will not have a choice imposed on her by her friends, of which she herself does not approve. I remember once when we girls were talking over Mrs. Arnold's unfortunate story, Cecilia blamed her grand-mama Bidulph's scruples with regard to Mr. Falkland, the father of your friend, and went so far as to say that she thought her mother had made too great a sacrifice to duty, in giving him up so easily. This makes for you, Edward; she is not so much terrified at the thoughts of a giddy fellow as her sister is; besides, really I think your family and rank in life might very fairly entitle you to either of them, so that (abstractedly from the absolute necessity you are under of getting twenty thousand pounds *some* where, and which is not to be found under every stone) I am far from looking upon our alliance as an injury to the family, not even to Sir George Bidulph's

dulph's saucy looks, and lady Sarah's pinched nose.

I have left Dolly reading politicks to the old dryad; whose eyes begin to fail him, and have stole up stairs to scribble. I shall dispatch this to you early in the morning by my flying-post, as I call Jerry, and you may return me a line by him to inform me how Falkland's pulse beats, if you have seen him since his visit here.

P. S. I had almost forgot to tell you that Dolly and I had half an hour's chat by ourselves after Falkland was gone, for I am now no longer *forbid* to speak of him; the case is altered; our fears of his indifference are at an end. The poor girl finds herself plunged in deeper than before, and wonders at the cause; for *she is affected beyond measure at the thoughts of his being as wretched as herself*. Hang me if I believe her; the pleasure of being beloved again, more than counterbalances her fears for the consequences, and I believe at this minute she does not well know whether she is sorry or glad.

LETTER XIX.

Sir EDWARD AUDLEY to Miss AUDLEY.

Oxford, July 26th.

A Few words, Sophy, and no more. Falkland supped with me last night, and after having railed at me for breaking my engagement, which I excused my own way, he told me what passed in yesterday's interview pretty nearly as you related it; only with a few additions suggested, I suppose, by his own vanity; for he said Miss Arnold looked so pale and languishing that it grieved him to the heart, and he could *kill* himself for being the cause. Coxcomb, muttered I to myself, what pity it is thou canst boast of such a conquest! The thing was now so apparent, he said, that a man must be blind not to see it; and the lady must think him very stupid, or very ungrateful, if he did not at least appear sensible of the honour she did him. Very true, Falkland, undoubtedly, the laws of humanity, the laws of civility demand

mand so much from you. For though it is the farthest in the world from my thoughts, said he, to take any advantage of her tenderness, yet surely I may make her a return of friendship and esteem, though I mean to go no farther. By all means, said I; or suppose you were to throw in a little *Platonic* love, there can be no harm in that either; two seraphims might entertain *that* for each other; and Miss Arnold seems of a turn to relish those ætherial ardors, much better than a vulgar passion. I said this with so grave a countenance and tone of voice, that he did not find me out. I am much of your mind, replied he; and if I thought it would contribute to her happiness, I would pay her my Platonic adorations with all my soul, for I have absolutely no designs upon her person, though I think her very handsome, but Cecilia has been beforehand with her in my heart. Well, prithee, said I, take compassion on the poor girl; you may make love to her in blank verse; (for a man is never serious but in prose) and if she allows you the privilege of kissing the tip of
her

her little finger, (though I believe even that is beyond the bounds of Platonism) you must seem in raptures with the favour, and speak of it as the ultimate of your wishes. This will sooth her and divert you, and no harm can come of it; and so here's Dolly Arnold's health. We both drank it, and he seems pleased with the conceit. Yet 'tis such a sly varlet, that even my plummet, which is not a short one, cannot fathom him to the bottom; for whether he really means to pursue this hint, or pretended to adopt it merely to save his credit with me, after his former declarations, I am at a loss to determine; but be it which way it will, the success is equally sure, for I never knew a pair of seraphic lovers who did not bring matters to a very earthly conclusion in the end, no matter what their designs were, at setting out. I think it only now remains to contrive opportunities for Falkland to express his *disinterested friendship*, and *exalted esteem* for Miss Arnold, without any witnesses. I wish the venerable Price would take a nap for the remainder of the summer, for
 he

he is very much in our way ; yet he sometimes dines abroad ; can't you give me notice of those days, and I'll engage for Falkland's attending you on them? depend upon it he will not want much spurring ; I shall turn his vanity to good account. And then you know, Sophy, you must sometimes pay your duty to your mama, why not *that* day as well as another ? You had absolutely promised before, and your mama will take it ill if you disappoint her. As for my part, I have so many whimsical engagements, that I can never be at a loss to excuse myself for not going with Falkland, if he should ask me ; I don't know whether I shan't even tell him, that having had myself a little *penchant* for Miss Arnold, it would not afford me the least entertainment to be an humble spectator of his triumphs. There will be nothing amiss in this, I think ; yet I shall either venture it or not, as occasion serves. —

Here follows a series of letters between Miss Audley and her brother, by which it appears that Mr. Falkland daily gained a stronger

stronger ascendancy over the heart of Miss Arnold ; and if he did not altogether adopt the Platonic system, he at least had not made any declarations of another nature. The lady gives her brother a circumstantial account of what passed in every visit, some of which were contrived (though without Miss Arnold's knowledge) in Mr. Price's absence ; Miss Audley herself sometimes forming pretences to be out of the way, on which occasion her friend always told her the substance of those conversations she held with Falkland.

Sir Edward Audley, on the other hand, relates to his sister what discoveries he had made in the *investigation*, as he calls it, of Falkland's heart, and wherein he hints that he still thought him devoted to Cecilia. During the course of this whole correspondence, there is manifested a surprising deal of art, practised by this intriguing brother and sister, in order to pervert the minds of the two young persons, on whom they had their separate influence ; in which attempt, Sir Edward seems to have in
some

some measure succeeded. It appears that Miss Audley and her brother but seldom met, which in one of her letters she accounts for in these words, ‘ It
‘ will not now be in my power to see you,
‘ for as my mama is going to the Farm
‘ with Harry, (who I think continues very
‘ puny) I shall have no pretence for going
‘ to Oxford, as Miss Arnold knows I have
‘ no acquaintance amongst the towns-
‘ people, and she is with me in every other
‘ visit I make.’

As the above-mentioned series of letters contain a very minute detail, which tho’ not unentertaining, does nevertheless not very considerably advance the story; the editor has, to avoid swelling this collection to too great a bulk, omitted them; and in this place presents the reader with one from Mrs. Arnold, which he has selected from some others as that which more immediately carries on the narrative.

LETTER XX.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Miss ARNOLD.

Burnly, Sept. 3d.

I Thought to have embraced my dearest Dolly as on this day, and am as much mortified at the disappointment, as I am sure she will be ; but an unlooked for accident has occurred, which will detain me here a week or ten days longer.

You know, I told you in my last, that lady V— had been ordered to the Bath by her physicians. Poor woman, she has not only lost all appetite, but now complains of such a constant and violent pain in her stomach, that if the waters don't relieve her, we are apprehensive of the worst consequences. The very day on which this journey was determined, and fixed for the first of September, I received a letter from lady Sarah, in which she informed me that she was going immediately to Bath to spend a couple of months there ; that Sir George was to call on her in his

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way

way to London, and that they should come to town together, she ~~hoped~~ before Christmas. She complains of not being well; but the truth I believe is, she was tired of Sidney Castle, for, you know, she hates the country. A thought unluckily came into lady V—'s head, which has been productive of something that has vexed me extremely. She begged I would write to lady Sarah, and intreat the favour of her to hire a house for lady V— and her family. As Mrs. and Miss Darnley go with her, they do not choose to be in lodgings, and they wished to have a place ready for their reception against they went down.

I writ immediately to lady Sarah agreeably to this request, and was favoured directly with an answer, wherein she tells me she has engaged a house for lady V—, beseeching me at the same time to let Miss Cecilia come with her to Bath, as she (lady Sarah) was quite alone, and I should make her wonderfully happy by indulging her with her niece's company. Inconsiderate woman! she values not the repose of any one but herself. Is she not to have you both

both with her next winter? and next winter may perhaps open to you new prospects, such as probably may separate you from your mother's arms; why then am I to be deprived of my Cecilia's cheerful society sooner than there is a necessity for it? Why are you to be robbed of your sister's company after an absence already too long? For she adds in her letter, '*I shall bring Cecilia to London with me directly from hence, and Sir George himself shall go down to Oxfordshire for Miss Arnold on our return to town.*'

You cannot imagine, my dear, how this unseasonable demand has distressed me, because I cannot well tell how to refuse it. You are no stranger to the captious temper of lady Sarah, nor to the influence she has over your uncle. I know I should utterly disoblige both by a denial, and perhaps deprive you of the advantage of being with Sir George next winter, as my brother's actions are altogether regulated by her ladyship's pleasure. Lady N—, who looks upon this as an agreeable jaunt for my daughter, is very pressing that I should let her go; so are the other two

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ladies,

ladies, but the child herself wishes to return to her sister. I cannot, however, excuse myself; Lady Sarah's instances are so pressing, the opportunity so convenient, and the company with whom she is to go, so eligible, that I have had an unwilling consent wrung from me already.

The house which lady Sarah has taken cannot be ready, it seems, this week, which has postponed lady V—'s journey, and in consequence of that my return home; as I would fain enjoy as much of my daughter's company as I can. She embraces you, my love, with all her heart. Tell my Orlando I am delighted with the account Mr. Price gives me of the progress he is making in his studies; he shares my heart equally with you and your sister. I hope the good old man approves as much of you in your capacity of mistress of a family, as he does in every thing else; and that you have supplied my place on more important occasions than merely that of presiding at my table. Assure Miss Audley I am highly sensible of the obligation I have to her and good lady Audley, for
thus

thus prolonging the happiness you have received from your young friend's amiable conversation. Adieu, my beloved; my next greeting to you, I hope, will be face to face in my own peaceful dwelling.——

L E T T E R X X I .

Miss AUDLEY to Sir EDWARD AUDLEY.

Woodberry, Sept. 6th.

[Miss Audley having in the beginning of her letter given her brother the substance of the above, proceeds:]

———What's to be done now, Edward? How provoking it is thus to have this little lively eel slip through our fingers! She will have all the flutterers in the place about her, for the jackanapes loves to be admired. Had she received her first impressions *here*, I should not be half so much alarmed; for constancy is accounted a prime virtue; and abiding by a first love, is a tenet held in great veneration amongst your young maidens bred up in the coun-

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try;

try; and you cannot conceive the advantage it gives a man to have made a *first* impression in a solitude; he will for a long time maintain the superiority he *then* appeared to have over the rest of mankind, and the same vows which perhaps would be rejected with scorn in a brilliant drawing-room, would probably be received with transport in a sequestered bower.

This untoward accident has really damped my spirits so, that I cannot conjure up a single idea that affords me a gleam of comfort. I wish that narrow faced and narrow hearted vixen, lady Sarah, were bed-ridden at Sidney Castle. What's to be done, Edward? I repeat it once more.——

L E T T E R XXII.

Sir EDWARD AUDLEY to Miss AUDLEY.

Oxford, Sept. 6th.

I'LL tell you what's to be done, Sophy; I set out to-morrow morning post for Bath, where, getting the start of the Burnly snails, I shall be on the spot to receive my
little

little divinity, and shall take care to anticipate every puppy that dares approach her. I'll dance *with* her, sing *to* her, write verses *on* her, and shoot any man through the head that looks at her. My access to her will be easy, as Sir George Bidulph is not there; for I shall bribe all the servants, make love to lady Sarah's monkey, and swear she herself is the *best bred* woman in Christendom: and if the Lancashire family should be for putting in their *wbys* and their *wherefores*, I'll accommodate myself to them too. I'll moralize with lady V——, lecture on housewifery with Mrs. Darnley, and bespatter reputations with the middle-aged maiden the daughter. Why, lord, child, 'tis the luckiest thing that could have happened; I look to be the idol of the whole set, and think it not at all unlikely that I shall trundle off Cecilia in a coach and six before the end of Noyember—Ay, say you; but what pretence have you for taking this journey? what will Falkland say to such a flight? Bless me, Sophy! have not you heard that our uncle Howel in Wales, who has been

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dying

dying for these ten years, is now going to die in good earnest? and that, forgetting all old animosities, he is going to make his last will, and has sent for me, his heir apparent, to see me before his departure, and commit to my hands the pious care of closing his eyes? You have not heard a syllable of the matter? Harkye, Sophy, a word in your ear; nor I neither. I would I could. Yet the thing must be just so; and I shall have, in ten minutes, the letter from his steward, commanding my personal attendance, ready written in my pocket. The short cut is from Gloucestershire across the Severn; and then, what so natural (the old gentleman having grown somewhat better, his mind being relieved by this his prudent disposition of his worldly affairs) what is so natural, I say, as for me, poor young man, wearied with my constant attendance on a sick bed, in my return to take a little trip to Bath, by way of relaxation? For the story shall pass current there too—Ay; but then Cecilia will write home word that you are not only at Bath, but that you make love to
her.

ber. She tells this to Dolly, Dolly tells it to Falkland, and then——Prithee stop, Sophy, don't be so rapid in thy conclusions; for not a tittle of this will come to pass. Cecilia is good-humour itself, and I need only say, My dear ma'am, pressing her hand gently (at a ball perhaps) when you write into Oxfordshire, if I am ever honoured with having a single thought bestowed on me, be so good as not to mention my being here; because I know if it should by any means come to my mother's ears, she would be much displeased at it, as she supposes I am still with my uncle, though I have absolutely his permission for returning home: but you know, ma'am, that ladies of a *certain* age do not always make proper allowances for young people. I am mistaken in my girl if she tells after this. The letter from Burnly, you say, was received this day, just after Falkland had taken his leave. He will not then know the contents of it till his next visit, which probably will not be these three or four days; and the deuce is in it if he can suspect, against all likelihood, that I was be-

fore-hand with him: so that I mean to-night (for I have not yet seen him to-day) to shew him the letter that I received from my uncle's steward (he himself, poor soul, is not able to write) and I leave it to my mother to apprize you of this my sudden journey, as I have not a minute's time to write you a single line. So pluck up your spirits, chit; for our vessel skims before the wind.

Thus far in rhodomontade, by way of answering your querulous demand of, *What's to be done, Edward?* But now to be serious; you and I consider this circumstance of Cecilia's visit to Bath in very different lights. Had Falkland had either love enough, or courage enough, (for I know not in which of the two he is most wanting) to have brought matters to a conclusion with Miss Arnold, Cecilia's return to Woodberry would then have been a desirable thing, as I might, in that case, agreeably to your ideas, have safely ventured to offer up my incense to her in some *sequestered bower*, without fear of having my devotions interrupted by any competitor

competitor for her favour. But unsteady as Falkland is in all his purposes, and particularly so with regard to Miss Arnold, I think his having her sister before his eyes (to whom I know him attached) was a thing rather to be dreaded; and though he has no hopes of her himself, he would certainly be a bar to my pretensions. On the contrary, cut off as he now is from the expectation of seeing her (as she is to go from Bath directly to London) I think he will, in all human probability, be wise enough not to lose a substance for a shadow, but, laying hold of Miss Arnold's favourable prepossession for him, he will, in some soft minute, determine, and declare himself. Once fixed, he is no longer to be feared; and I may, without reproach, pursue my fortune. I shall spend all the coming winter in London, an advantage which will be out of *his* power; and as I intend studiously to cultivate lady Sarah's acquaintance, I shall at least be always sure of a reception in town, whilst poor Falkland perhaps will be glad to use my intervention with his love; for I do not

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suppose

suppose the little dastard will venture at once to run away with him. This, you see, will make me a person of importance with Dolly; consequently get her on my side, and engage her to promote my interests with her sister: so that, though things have taken a turn in some respects different from what we expected, our main purpose remains unchanged; and I hold it expedient that Falkland's amour should be advanced with your best skill. Fail not to let me know how the quicksilver rises and falls in that variable machine——

P. S. Our mama is in the secret, and you will be *properly* apprized of my departure for Wales——

LETTER XXIII.

Sir EDWARD AUDLEY to Miss AUDLEY.

Bath, Sept. 20th.

EVERY thing hitherto has happened precisely as I foresaw it would—And where do you think I am lodged? Even under the very roof with my Cecilia; for
I took

I took care, the moment I got hither, to secure lodgings in the same house with lady Sarah Bidulph, who perfectly *doats* on me. What do you think of that, Sophy? I would not change my knack of dissembling for an estate of five thousand a year: and I am wise in the preference; for I should squander the one in a year or two, and the other is an inexhaustible treasure.

Lady Sarah (to whom I early paid my court) told me by way of news (for I was but just arrived from Wales) that she expected her niece in a day or two. 'Tis very kind in your ladyship, said I, to take the poor young creature under your own conduct; for to say the truth, Mrs. Arnold (though she is an extremely *good* woman) is not *quite* the pattern that one would choose for young persons to form their manners by, who may probably one day make a figure in the polite world—Why that's the very thing, Sir Edward; the poor creatures are absolutely rusticated—Oh, ma'am, they will be totally undone, if you don't take them into your own hands; for all the world knows your ladyship's knowlege in
the

the science of good *breeding* is superior to that of almost every woman of quality in England—Oh, Sir, your humble servant—I believe, indeed, (with as pleased a look as the little crabbed countenance could assume) I have been rather more conversant in those matters than poor Mrs. Arnold. How do you pass your time, lady Sarah? are there any people of fashion here at present? Lord, I don't know; I am but just come myself; though I fancy there are but few here as yet that one can converse with. If your ladyship has any services to command me, I am intirely at your devotion.

We walked out together. She fell in love with a set of china that stood in a shop window as we passed by; but upon enquiry, finding them, as she thought, too dear, her avarice got the better of her passion, and she went home without buying them; but I took care to send them to her, and was invited to drink tea out of them the same evening.

When the family of Burnly arrived, having already dedicated myself to lady Sarah, I was determined not to lose ground

by the approach of Cecilia. . On the contrary, I have made myself absolutely necessary to them all. I go to church with lady V—, and to market with Mrs. Darnley; for she is too notable to trust this office to a servant. I *shop* it, as the ladies call it, with lady Sarah, and bespeak caps at the milliner's for the girls. In short, they all allow me to be a *very modest pretty kind of young man*; and if my *estate* were answerable, lady Sarah should not *much* dislike me for one of her nieces. This she whispered to Miss Darnley, who dropped it to her waiting-maid, who told it to David, who communicates every thing to his master. But all these serve but as a chorus to a dramatic piece: they may help to carry on the business of the scene, but are none of them in themselves objects of attention. The principal personage, the heroine of the story, the Cecilia, I have not yet been able sufficiently to draw out from amongst this group of supernumerary figures. 'Tis such a little flash of lightning, there is no knowing where to have her; and if I were to be hanged for it, I cannot

cannot at this minute divine whether she likes me or not ; but I rather suspect she does. I have been playing my batteries on her for several days, and am always received with good humour. I make love to her sometimes, even before lady Sarah's face, who, looking upon it (for that very reason) as pleasantry, does not discourage it ; but if I grow serious, as I now and then do, when I get Cecilia in a corner, the urchin always calls Miss Darnley to her assistance, and then the two wasps fasten on me, and sting me to death with their flippant tongues. This is, Sophy, but the opening of the campaign ; yet I hope to return to you crowned with laurels ; and then, I think, with the help of Falkland's myrtles, we may twine a pretty garland.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

Miss AUDLEY to Sir EDWARD AUDLEY.

Oxford, Sept. 25th.

WHAT an idle creature are you, brother, not to have given me a line sooner! when you might be very certain, that irregular as I know you to be in your motions, I would not venture to write to you till I was sure you were fixed. I believe I must allow, after all, that though we women have livelier imaginations, you men have deeper judgments, and know better how to deduce consequences; for our affairs here are beginning to fall into the very track which you foresaw and foretold. Falkland seems nettled at Cecilia's going to Bath, instead of returning home with her mama, as if he thought himself neglected by it; and by way of being revenged on her for slighting a passion of which she is ignorant, and which probably were she to know she would condemn, he is become more assiduous than ever with
 regard

regard to Dolly. How ridiculous is this! yet 'tis human nature, at least 'tis the nature of you striplings. It is matter of astonishment to me, that he has not yet assumed courage enough to declare himself; for that he has not done so I am convinced, and Miss Arnold begins to lull her fears asleep with a pretty idea which she has lately taken up, viz. that there is a *most perfect friendship* subsisting between them, which, if it were not for considerations of duty, *might*, she owns, possibly rise to a real passion on *both* sides; but checked as they now are, they content themselves with confining their ardor within the bounds of *esteem*; and desire no greater felicity than seeing and conversing with each other. I indulge her in this romantic folly, relying on your sagacity for what the conclusion of this fancy will be, when opportunity serves.

I returned home, overwhelmed with thanks and acknowledgements, the day after Mrs. Arnold arrived at her own house; and since that, Falkland's visits to Woodberry have not been so frequent, for the

the good lady does not approve of such repeated excursions from *our* studies; but you may be sure I do not suffer a harmless and disinterested friendship to languish for want of the means to keep it up: therefore whenever Dolly pays me a visit without her mama, which is often the case, Falkland is always of the party; for what is more natural than to ask him, who is next door to us in a manner, to come and drink tea with his *sister* Arnold? But the worst of it is, I cannot, upon those occasions, contrive, with any colour of decorum, to leave them to a *tete a tete*; and I don't take it to be the mode now-a-days, as it was in times of old, for lovers to breathe out their amorous wishes in the presence of a confidant. I have, however, given a little stroke, on which I pique myself, and from which I expect wonderful good effects.

I was yesterday to pay Miss Arnold a morning visit. Whilst I was with her, a letter arrived from Bath: it was from Cecilia. Dolly opened it with impatience, and I observed smiled as she read. What entertains

entertains you so much? said I. Cecilia is in high spirits, said she, and extremely pleasant in her little narratives. And why won't you let me partake of the pleasure? She read part of the first page of the letter to me, in which Cecilia, in her sprightly way, gives an account of the company, amusements, &c. when coming towards the bottom, she stopped short, skipped over some lines, and began a paragraph at the other side. What's that you boggle so at, Dolly? There is a secret here, said she, which I must not divulge—Tell it me this minute; you do nothing if you don't give me the secret. Would I keep one from you? Ah, fy, Miss Arnold!—She smiled again, and giving me the letter, There, said she, there seems to be very little in it, nor can I conceive why my sister should enjoin me secrecy; but since she *has* done so, I desire, Sophy, you won't speak of it to any one. My mama is so indulgent, she never desires to see the correspondence which passes between my sister and me. Cecilia, after having, by way of raillery, talked of some conquests she had made, says

says these words : ‘ All these are but flutters, and I believe only *pretend* to like me, because I am the fashion ; but I *have* a lover here, who is one in sober sadness : for when a man tries to win the good opinion of one’s friends, we may be sure he means something more than mere compliment. You would be surprised were I to name him, but that I shan’t do till we meet. Mean while I have particular reasons that even thus much should not be known : therefore I beg, my dear, you will not mention it to any one whatsoever.’

I returned the letter to Dolly, telling her, I thought her sister had intrusted just *nothing* to her confidence. I concluded, Cecilia meant no other than *you* by this nameless lover, and thought her very faithful in keeping your counsel ; but I resolved at the same time to make a proper use of the hint she had given her sister. I engaged Dolly, with her mama’s permission, to spend the next day with me. She came accordingly this morning ; Falkland was with us ; we three were in the garden together.

He

He asked Miss Arnold when she had heard from her sister? Yesterday, she replied. He hoped Miss Cecilia was well? Very well, was all Dolly's answer. But I, who was determined he should know a little more, blurted out, Ay, but you don't tell him of the lover that Cecilia—— Dolly looked at me. I clapped my hand upon my mouth, as if conscious of having done wrong. What a blab am I! cried I. A blab, indeed! said Dolly, a little gravely; upon my word, Miss Audley, I will never trust you again. Falkland coloured up to the eyes; but affecting to laugh, Prithee, who is this lover? said he. 'Tis nothing but a joke, answered Miss Arnold, yet I love fidelity even in trifles.—I winked at Falkland, as much as to say, Ask no more questions. He took my meaning, and turned the conversation; but, as I expected, failed not to demand an explanation after Miss Arnold was gone. I affected mystery at first; but after much pressing was at last prevailed on to tell him, that Cecilia had written her sister word that she was addressed by a gentle-

gentleman of whom she spoke very handsomely, and who had made himself very acceptable to lady Sarah Bidulph; but that till her mama was properly apprized of it, either by her ladyship or Sir George, she desired the affair might not be mentioned at all. Faikland asked the name of this lover; I told him, that either Cecilia had not named him or if she had, Dolly had not thought proper to trust me with it; and I begg'd of him never to speak of the thing to Miss Arnold, as it would only serve to make her reproach me with my indiscretion. He looked mortified; but said I might depend on it he should not give himself the *trouble* to make enquiries about a subject in which he was *no way concerned*. Good, said I to myself. If I be not mistaken, young man, you will become a lover in good earnest out of pure spite—Call you not this advancing his amour, Edward?

[Here follows another series of letters between Sir Edward and Miss Audley, which, for the same reasons before offered, are omitted, as they contain nothing more than reciprocal accounts of the progress
of

of their schemes. Sir Edward mentions in several of them that he had hopes of succeeding with Cecilia, as lady Sarah not only admitted but encouraged his visits. Miss Audley informs her brother that her young friend, without knowing it, was every day more and more in love, and she thought that Falkland himself was become more tender. The following letter the Editor thinks the only one of this number materially necessary to the carrying on of the story.]

L E T T E R XXV.

Miss AUDLEY to Sir EDWARD AUDLEY.

Oxford, Nov. 2d.

IO, Io, triumphe! Oh, Edward, I wish thy vows and Cecilia's were reciprocated with the same solemnity, as those of Falkland and Miss Arnold were last night. I knew it would, I knew it *must* come to that; and the lovers, without absolutely being married, are hampered in the very ties we wished them.

Miss

Miss Arnold came to us yesterday about five o'clock ; she had got leave to go with my mama and me to an assembly, and consequently was to lie at our house that night, for Mrs. Arnold has indulged her in greater liberties than usual on account of her sister's absence. My mama (as was preconcerted) had gone out immediately after dinner. *She was sent for in a violent hurry to a lady, a particular friend of her's who was in labour; there was no refusing such a summons; but she would, if possible, return time enough to go with us to the assembly.* Falkland was with us by appointment, and was to have attended us thither.

Dolly was dressed with the utmost elegance, and looked like an angel; but I saw by her informed countenance the minute she entered the room that something disturbed her. I made my mama's excuses to her, telling her, if she could not disengage herself time enough from her friend, that I would, if Miss Arnold chose it, endeavour to get some other married lady to go with us. Suppose, said Falkland, we were to change the scheme of

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this evening's entertainment, and instead of going to the stupid assembly, pass the evening where we are? With all my heart, answered I; And mine, cried Miss Arnold, for I do not find myself at present much disposed for the amusements of such a place.

Falkland now approached her, and sitting down by her, took her hand respectfully; Something has disconcerted you, my dear Miss Arnold, said he, I have seen it in your looks ever since you came in; *tell me?*—What's the matter?—There are certain persuasive tones (of which Falkland is a perfect master) that are not to be resisted; he can, when he pleases, assume a sweet plaintiveness in his voice, that I have often considered as a dangerous advantage. Dolly, I believe, felt the force of it in that instant. She withdrew her hand gently from his, and, not daring to confess the true cause of her uneasiness; she replied, I am the most unfit person in the world for a life of hurry; you cannot imagine how much my spirits have been fluttered to-day, to think of what a scene of tumult and dissipation I am going to plunge into
at

at my uncle Bidulph's, for lady Sarah is never happy but in a crowd. You do not as yet think of going to London? cried Falkland. I apprehended Sir George purposed not to return till after Christmas. He has changed his mind, answered Dolly, or rather lady Sarah has changed it for him; for they purpose setting out together from Bath next Sunday, and the following week my uncle comes himself to fetch me to town. I believe, added she, Sir George has a husband in his thoughts for my sister, for he informs my mama that my lord V— is now at Bath. He bestows great encomiums on him, and says that lady V— and he have already given him to Cecilia, with whom my lord is quite charmed; and this I suppose was the lover that Cecilia hinted at.

I saw the blood mount into Falkland's cheeks; he seemed mortified,—but whether at the thoughts of Cecilia's marriage, or at those of losing his conquest by Dolly's removing to London, I can't say; for I know not whether love or vanity was in that moment most predominant. They

were both silent for a little while; Falkland's eyes were fixed on Miss Arnold, her's were bent to the ground: and I perceived it was with difficulty she restrained her tears. He saw it too; this was the time to speak. You are going, madam, said he, to receive the homage of all the world; this obscure corner will be no longer in your thoughts, and you will forget perhaps even the *friendship* with which you have honoured me.—No! ——— was all Dolly could reply; she dared not to trust the steadiness of her voice with any more; even this poor little monosyllable, though uttered emphatically, was not raised above her breath. Again they were both silent, and I waited with that kind of expectation, I believe, in my face that tame fowls appear to have when they expect a shower. What would I then have given for a decent pretence to have left the room! The juncture seemed so critical, if let slip perhaps it was irrecoverable. In short, I was just going to rise and leave them without any pretence at all, when a loud rap at the door offered me a very fair one; up I
bounced

bounced from my chair, and flew out of the parlour to order myself to be denied, as I told them, having forgot to use this precaution before; but one of the servants, happening to be in the hall, had already opened the door, and in rustled Miss Leatham. I led her into the little drawing-room, called for lights, and we both sat down. Right glad was I of her company, insipid as it is, as it afforded me a very good excuse for absenting myself a while from the two friends, who, I had reason to believe, would in that interval discover the fallacy of their Platonic system.

Miss Leatham was going to the assembly; but as she is one of those who affects coming in late to a public place, she chose to oblige me with her company for half an hour before she went. Having exhausted her whole stock of ideas, she asked me (observing I was dressed out) whether I did not mean to go to the assembly? I told her it had been my intention, but that a young lady who was to have gone with me, and who was then in the house, having been taken ill had prevented my design.

This was a sufficient hint, and she went away directly.

I returned to the parlour, and was very soon convinced that Falkland had not made a foolish use of his time. Dolly had but just time to withdraw her hand from his lips, as I entered the room. You and I, Edward, who can read faces, would have wanted no other information of what had passed, than what we could have learnt from both of theirs. On his, sat an air of triumph, mingled with pleasure and gratitude: On her's complacency and redoubled tenderness, chastened by fear. He now assumed the conversation with the utmost freedom, and rattled away on the subject of my visiter (whom he knows very well) with that kind of ease which a person discovers, who having happily dispatched some important concern that hung on their mind, descends into the common affairs of life with a disposition to be pleased with every thing. Dolly, on the other hand, was silent, and even appeared embarrassed; yet through this I could discover an inward satisfaction that proved to

to me her *heart* was more at ease than before. *She* seemed *more* reserved than usual; Falkland, much *less*. He more than once ventured to take her hand; she constantly withdrew it, yet her looks reprimanded not the freedom. Lord, how prettily foolish was all this! I would have given six-pence for a lover myself; and had Cecilia and you been present, all the world to nothing she would have been your own; for, as I told you before, Edward, we girls hate to be like cyphers.

My mama returned to supper (she could not possibly get away from her friend sooner.) We were all infinitely good humoured, but rather sillyish; for every one was full of themselves, though each asked questions of the other, about which they did not care a pinch of snuff to be informed. Falkland took his leave at a very decent hour, and Miss Arnold and I retired to my chamber, for she chose to sleep with me. When we were alone, Well, my dear? said I. Oh, Sophy, (both her hands held up) what have I done? *What* have you done, Dolly? no harm, I am

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sure.

sure.—I have given myself away! an irrevocable vow has passed my lips never to be the wife of any man but Falkland! Bravo! said I. Good God, cried she, clasping her hands together, are you not startled at the phrenzy of this action? I am frightened when I look back; how little ought we to be trusted with ourselves? Oh, Miss Audley, you left me in a fatal minute. Had I escaped to-night, I was determined never to have given Mr. Falkland another opportunity, for *till* to-night he never explained himself. And what said he to-night, Miss Arnold? for hitherto, as far as I understand, (whatever his secret wishes might have been) he seemed not to *claim* more than friendship and esteem from you. Sophy, said she, whilst you live never contract a friendship with a *man*; 'twas that deceitful word which has ensnared me, and led me at last to burst the bonds of filial duty, of confidence, of gratitude to the best of mothers! —Cecilia too, what will *she* say to find her sister such a cast-away? A flood of tears now burst from her eyes. Have you not,
my

my dear, said I, received the vows of Falkland in return? Oh yes, answered she, yet I know not how it came to pass. My mind was all a chaos, I forgot every thing, I existed but to him; and he obtained my promise before I was sensible that he had demanded it. The moment you left the room, conscious of my own weakness and terrified at my situation, I burst into tears; Falkland wept at the same time. I could not bear this; I started up from my chair, and would have ran out. I believe I should have flown to you, my eyes all red as they were; but he caught me by the hand, — You are going, my dear Miss Arnold, said he, you are going to be the idol of a thousand hearts, and I shall be forgotten. Impossible, I cried; Oh, Falkland! you know too well that that is impossible! — Say then, said he, that I shall never lose the place that I have now the happiness to possess in your heart. — Sinking almost into the earth with confusion, I scarcely articulated the word, Never! Will you then be mine? he demanded. — I know not what answer I re-

turned; an assent no doubt it was, for he instantly (for the first time) took the liberty of saluting me, and then in the strongest expressions swore he would live only for me. — Awaked as it were from a dream, I cried out, What have I said? What has made me the happiest of men, he replied, you have promised to be mine only. See, Sophy, continued she, into what an irretrievable error a few short minutes may betray us! He talked afterwards of a private marriage, hopeless as he is of getting my friends consent; but I conjured him not to speak of that. — Why, what do you then mean to do, my dear? interrupted I: surely you purpose to fulfill your engagements to Falkland? Doubtless, said she, I wed him or my grave; yet how is it possible for me all at once to determine on a step so rash, and but a few hours ago, so unforeseen? We are both very young, we may wait a while — Time, with the interposition of a few compassionate friends, may do something in our favour. I know my uncle has ambitious views both for my sister and me; but

but perhaps he may be satisfied with disposing of Cecilia to a titled husband, and leave me free to make an humbler choice. If my sister should marry my lord V—— I stopped her short here, thinking it very expedient to throw in a seasonable word for you; A propos, Dolly, said I, you imagine that lord V—— was the nameless lover whom Cecilia hinted at in a former letter to you; but I am of a quite different opinion, and rather suspect 'tis my mad-cap of a brother. Though I affected to say this very jocosely, Miss Arnold seemed surprized, and asked me why I thought so; Because, said I, I have had a letter from him very lately, wherein he tells me he has been at Bath for some time; but charges me not to let my mama know it, as she would be very angry with him for absenting himself from my uncle Howel. Well? said Miss Arnold. Well, said I, and he says, that in order to drive you from his thoughts, and be revenged of you at the same time, he makes love to your sister. This is so like Sir Edward! continued I, laughing; but I can tell you, he

adds that Cecilia receives him kindly, and that he is a great favourite of lady Sarah's; and really your sister's keeping his secret, which I suppose he begg'd of her to do, *does* carry with it an air of kindness. 'Tis very true, said Miss Arnold, smiling, and I am very glad to find that the slight wound he received from me is so soon healed. My brother, said I, is not so romantic as to love on without the hopes of a return; but if Cecilia be disposed to make him one, I insist on it, Dolly, that you do not endeavour to divert her inclinations from him, by telling her what has passed, with regard to yourself. Ah, Miss Audley! replied she, I have *now* no right to prescribe to my sister; I am too much humbled in my own eyes, to presume to be a monitor. There was something indignant in her manner, like one who felt themselves under the mortifying necessity of conforming (however repugnant to their own sentiments) to the will of those in whose power they have put themselves. This, Edward, is not the least of those evils to which we poor women subject our-

ourselves, when we deviate a little from the very narrow and thorny paths of rectitude; but let Miss Arnold consider it thus if she will, it makes for our purpose; and one sometimes obtains from fear, what even friendship would deny, and gratitude itself would refuse. If Sir Edward, said I, is so happy as to succeed with Cecilia, it will pave the way for Falkland. The disparity between *them* is not so great as between your lover, and lord V—, and your choice would not throw you at such a distance from your sister; that single consideration should induce you to countenance my brother's pretensions; besides, the strict friendship between them will enable you to hear from, and perhaps oftner to see Falkland than you could otherwise expect. —No, Sophy, said she, my sister shall never have *my* example as an excuse for disobedience. If Sir Edward wins her heart, I shall not interpose between them; (though I do not think 'tis likely he should ever obtain the suffrage of my family) but Cecilia shall not have the frailty of her elder sister to plead in her excuse
for

for an imprudent choice; therefore be assured I shall conceal my engagements with Mr. Falkland as carefully from her, as I would from the rest of my friends, till the most favourable opportunity shall offer of divulging them. What a perverse determination is this, Edward! it has unhinged the principal movement in our machine; yet my hope is, that Dolly will not be able to keep her resolution.

But if after all the pains with which I have been labouring for your interests, my lord V— should step in and snatch away the reward of our toil! The thought is not to be borne; *Have I for Banquo's issue, &c.* Oh, Edward, it rests upon the single point of a young girl's liking a sprightly young fellow of twenty-three, better than an exceedingly grave man (the very reverse of her own temper) with the comfortable addition of, I believe, ten years more added to his age. That's something yet;—but I like not his pretensions, and wish he had staid in Germany.

My mama purposes going to London in about a fortnight. I suppose you will soon join

join us there, and as you stand so well with lady Sarah, the way is open to you, at least as far as access to Cecilia will carry you. When Falkland comes to town, I take it for granted, you will fix him at our house. Our acquaintance (my mama's and mine I mean) is but slight with lady Sarah Bidulph, yet we mean to cultivate it; the two girls, of course, will be often with us. Cecilia must then necessarily discover (spite of her sister) how matters stand between her and Falkland. What then will become of Dolly's wife precautions? And who knows but the path may look so flowery to the younger, as may tempt her steps to wander as far as we are disposed to lead her? ——— Adieu, my dear Edward; what a plotter am I become for thy service!

LETTER XXVI.

Sir EDWARD AUDLEY to Miss AUDLEY.

Bath, Nov. 8th.

AND so Miss Arnold has given herself to Falkland; an irrevocable vow has passed her lips, is't not so? Oh, those ruby lips! Well, let him take her; and now to other business, for I am in a horrid ill humour. The Bidulphs set off this morning for London, and have taken my little girl with them. I have lost since I came to this scurvy place——more than I'll tell you; for though none of the sober ones knew of my playing, I fell in with a set here who used to meet every night in a private room, and, curse them, they have stripped me. Another thousand deep since I left Oxford. But this is not the worst, the rival I have got is a devilish formidable one. That same lord V—, who came down hither to pay his duty (as the old beldames call it) to his mother, dares to eye my Cecilia; but thank heaven she
seems

seems utterly regardless of him; yet is he one of those plausible curs, that all your mothers, and aunts, and cousins would be for hampering directly in lawful wedlock with any young thing of whom they had to dispose. Besides, he is an earl, Sophy, and I being but a simple baronet, he consequently mounts three steps higher on the ladder of lady Sarah's good graces. Sir George (with a vengeance to him!) invited his visits in town. Oh, to be sure his lordship does not *mean* to drop the acquaintance.—Now could I drink hot blood! and utter such imprecations on them all! I tell you, Sophy, I am desperate, and if a change is not wrought and that suddenly in my fortune, I know not to what extremities I may be driven. If I find this interloper is likely to snatch away the fruits of our long laboured process, by my soul, I'll snap up Cecilia at the first short turn I meet her, and leave it to her own good-nature, and Mrs. Arnold's *christianity* to work out my pardon. Falkland, at the same time, may carry off *his* legal prize. What a glorious triumph would

would this be over the insolent blood of the Bidulphs ! I shall leave Bath directly, and make straight to London, without returning to Oxford, as I at first proposed.

[Here, in the order of the manuscript, follow some letters which passed between Mr. Falkland and Miss Arnold after the latter had gone to London, those to her being directed under cover to Miss Audley ; but as these contain nothing more than mutual expressions of affection, they are omitted. Miss Arnold says in one of them, ‘ The Audley family are our constant visitors, which is the chief pleasure of my life ; for Sophy and I talk whole hours of you. Sir Edward pretends to be an admirer of my sister, but she likes him not ; and indeed he is so volatile there is no knowing whether he is in jest or earnest.’]

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L E T T E R XXVII.

Miss CECILIA ARNOLD to Mrs. ARNOLD.

London, Dec. 18th.

“ONE of the best girls in the world,” you say I am. My dear mama, those are the kind words with which your last letter was closed. I wish I may continue to deserve that character, for indeed I am so flattered and so caressed that I am in great danger of being spoiled. I am the darling of lady Sarah; and only my uncle Bidulph is fonder of my sister than he is of me, my vanity would carry me away for want of a little ballast.

I have now no less than *four* lovers. Dolly is so exceedingly retired (for she hates company) that she has not one, at least not one who has ventured to declare himself. Lady Sarah calls her a prude, and says she freezes the men with her cold looks. My uncle swears she is handsomer than I am, to which opinion I very readily subscribe.—Well, but about these four lovers—

lovers—besides the three I mentioned to you before, lord V—'s name now graces my list. He is come to town, has been several times to visit us, and has said such fine things to me! Dear mama, you can't imagine what a fool they make of me. My spirits hurry me away, and I know you love my idle prattle, yet I am disposed to be very grave at this minute, for I suspect there are serious designs going forward. My three first lovers I laughed at, but my fourth, I am afraid, will vex me. Both Sir George and lady Sarah speak of him as of a desirable alliance; but remember I tell you, mama, I do not like lord V—, and I am sure you will never constrain your own poor Cecilia. My sister approves mightily of him. I think he would make an excellent husband for her, for he is as sober as she, and she would have no objection to his being twelve or fourteen years older than herself.—She looks over my shoulder, and says, 'No, indeed, I should not.'—Well, then take him, Dolly, for I can spare him. Here, my dear mama, let us both subscribe our
names

names with the tenderest affection and duty. I have written the letter, Miss Arnold; and therefore my name shall be signed first.

C. A.

D. A.

P. S. Our respects attend Mr. Price. Our loves to Orlando. Pray, mama, why does not he come to town to see us?

LETTER XXVIII.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Miss CECILIA ARNOLD.

Woodberry, Dec. 22d.

CONTINUE, my dear, continue to cherish those charming spirits that make you so agreeable to all your friends, and which were the support of my life during my melancholy visit at Burnly. But beware, Cecilia, of letting them run away with you. I am not afraid of your vanity; your good sense will be a sufficient counterbalance to that, though your uncle were even as partial to you as he is to your
sister.

sister. I am not therefore afraid of your vanity, I say, but I am afraid of your caprice; for is there not something of that, child, in a resolution so suddenly formed not to like lord V—? for so I must construe your words; and sure I am 'tis impossible you can have any *rational* objection to him.

I remember him a boy when he first went into the army. He was then remarkably handsome, and time cannot have wrought such a change in a man not much over thirty,—but that he must still retain at least a very agreeable person. And for his character, 'tis such as must recommend him to every one of understanding and virtue. I would not constrain you, Cecilia; no, far be it from your affectionate parent's heart to constrain so obedient a child; but I would *advise* you, my dear, advise you for your good.

Advice from a mother was always considered by *me* as a *command*: yet I do not desire you to regard it in so severe a light. We have been educated differently. You were always treated with the kindest indulgence,

dulgence, with all reasonable allowances made for the inadvertence of youth, and the overboiling-spirits which your natural vivacity has given you. I, on the other hand, though tenderly beloved by my ever honoured mother, had, nevertheless, my neck early bowed to obedience; and this it was which constrained me to yield up my nearest wishes, and, as it were, mold my heart to the will of her to whom I thought I owed all duty. Perhaps your grand-mama exacted too much of me; for at the time Mr. Arnold was proposed to me as a husband, she knew I entertained more than a bare inclination for another object; but this is not your case, Cecilia; your young heart has not, it cannot have had the opportunity of engaging itself.

Why then reject an offer so honourable, so advantageous, so desirable in the eyes of all your friends? I am the more serious on this occasion, my dear, because I have very lately received a letter from lady V—herself on the same subject. She tells me her son was (to use her own words) smitten by you the moment he saw you; the ac-

count he received of your fortune and your education, probably, did not damp his growing inclination. Lady V— says in her letter, ‘ If you will trust to the judgment of a parent not extremely partial to lord V. he is a very valuable young man, and in every respect worthy of being my dear Mrs. Arnold’s son.’ These were her affectionate expressions; and she added, ‘ How delighted should I be to call you sister!’ See then, my love, what a prospect is opened before you of making yourself, of making your whole family happy! Yet *remember*, Cecilia, (I retort your own words back on you) I do not constrain you. I repeat it once more, I never will; though I should be sorry my daughter could not give a more substantial reason than mere whim, for refusing a man so unobjectionable as lord V—. Tell my dear Dolly, I do not think she has the less merit for not having so many *admirers* as her little lively sister. I am sure she has as many *lovers*, and perhaps Cecilia ought to be more mortified than proud, that she has so many *declared* ones.

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My brother and lady Sarah have my warmest wishes. Mr. Price kisses both your hands, and my Orlando, who was here when I received your last letter, and to whom I read it, says he hopes soon, in person, to do the same. Receive both of you, my dear children, the tenderest love, as well as ardent prayers for your happiness poured from the heart of your affectionate, &c.

LETTER XXIX.

Mr. FALKLAND to Sir EDWARD AUDLEY.

Oxford, December 20th.

HOW I curse my stars for what is past! how curse my own folly, my own vanity, my own childish pity, and weak resentment! but above all, how I curse you! *yes, you*, whose blind officious meddling friendship combined with them all to undo me. Did I not tell you in the beginning that I loved Cecilia, that I adored her, and that I felt nothing for

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her sister beyond the warmth of friendship? Why did you awaken my compassion, by discovering to me that she loved me? Why did you encourage me to feed a flame that I never thought of kindling, that I never wished, that I never meant to return? This, this is what I accuse you of; but the charge I have against myself is still more flagrant: I acknowledge myself coxcomb enough to have been pleased with the conquest of a heart on which I set not the least value; I acknowledge myself fool enough to have in some moments mistaken mere compassion for love; and I own myself traitor enough to have suffered the simple effusions of gratitude to pass upon an innocent creature for the genuine expressions of passion. My pride urged me on against inclination, and I felt a secret pleasure at the thoughts of humbling Sir George Bidulph, by triumphing in the affections of her whom he calls the *boast* of his family. See here the source of all my actions, despicable for that I was, thus to let such paltry passions wind me about like a machine! That fatal letter, written by
the

the arrogant and ill-boding pen of Bidulph, put the finishing hand to my destruction. *He had already given my Cecilia to lord V—*, he said. Cecilia herself tells her sister she had a lover; cruel and thoughtless as she was, why did she not then say that she hated him? What a load of remorse would that declaration have spared me! I thought *her* irretrievably lost to *me*; her sister's tenderness affected me; jealousy and indignation, mingling with gratitude and pity, lit up a momentary fire in my heart. I offered vows to Miss Arnold, which that heart, treacherous to its master as well as her, forced me in the instant to think sincere. I received hers in return, too, too sincere, I am afraid they are, for such a villain! For will you not think me one? will you not even call me one, when I tell you, that the next day all my indifference for her returned, and I found nothing in my heart but rancour against the happier lord V——?

The letters I have constantly received from her since, filled with tenderness and faith, reproach me in every line. How

difficult do I find it to frame my answers ! for I am not yet hardened enough in deceit not to be shocked at professing a love which I do not feel ; for, spite of all my efforts, I find that Cecilia holds her first place in my heart. I have oftentimes been half distracted with this thought ; but something occurred yesterday which has made me desperate. I happened to be with Mrs. Arnold when she received a letter from Cecilia, wherein she tells her mother positively that she *cannot like lord V—*. How delighted was I with this declaration, till I recollected my own fatal engagements ! But this is not all ; she mentioned other lovers. I demanded of Mrs. Arnold who they were. She named, as one of them, Sir *Edward Audley*. Sir Edward Audley the lover of Cecilia ! the baby-face, whose beauty was not to be compared to that of her sister ! I could stab you for daring to think of her ; and nothing saves you from my vengeance, but Cecilia's indifference for you.

I am half mad, Sir Edward ; so take nothing ill that I say. I dread the sight
of

of Miss Arnold; but I a thousand times more dread the invincible Cecilia, whose heart, perhaps, is still at liberty. What a storm has this thought raised in my bosom! I shall come to town in a few days, and woe be to him I find a successful rival! for I tell you, I would rather see Cecilia dead than in the arms of another.

LETTER XXX.

SIR EDWARD AUDLEY TO MR. FALKLAND.

London, December 23d.

HA, ha, ha, ha, poor Falkland! And so it is visited with compunction and remorse! All the bugbears that old Price used to conjure up, in order to frighten you in the nursery, have followed you, I find, to the university. Oh, fy, fy, Orlando! I am quite ashamed of you. I thought I had left you pretty well fortified against these sort of fopperies when I went to Wales; but I see there is no trusting such a half-fledged sinner to himself;

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for

for no sooner is my back turned, than whip you take your conscience out from between the leaves of your Bible, where you keep it like your band, for fear of being rump-
led, and *like* that, after a game of romps, you clap it on again, to visit your grave acquaintance; but why put it on to me, boy, who like you so much better in dishabille? I do think thou art the most whimsical fellow that ever I met with in my life; the dog in the manger was thy prototype. Why what a snarling cur art thou, to begrudge lord V—— and me a little snap at what thou canst not touch thyself? But your great consolation is, that this dainty morsel is out of the reach of us both; for, by her own confession, she does not care a farthing for either of us. I do firmly believe it, Falkland; and so things are just as they were before we set out: for as for your vows, and your gratitude, and your villainy, and your sensibility, and your perfidy, and your repentance, 'tis all such a bead-roll of Arnoldian nonsense, that I blush to hear a fellow of your spirit
talk

talk thus like a 'prentice-boy making his last speech at Tyburn, and bidding the good people beware of evil company, which had caused his downfall, and brought him unto that shameful end. You accuse *me* first, and then yourself; exactly the malefactor's cant. But pray, my penitent youth, what have either of us done to deserve condemnation? Thus the affair stands between us; I find out by chance that a fine girl is in love with you (by the way I liked her myself, and would have given a limb to have been in your place;) but jealousy and rivalry giving way to friendship, I acquaint you with your good fortune, and advise you, as I would have done my own brother, to make the most of it. Was there any harm in this, pray? You tell me, you love the sister of the lady. I ask you, did you ever receive any encouragement from her? ever make any addreses to her? or, in short, have you any hopes of obtaining her? No, no, no, was the answer to these three questions. I bid you quit the shadow, and pursue the substance. Was not that the advice of a

K 4

friend?

friend ? yet this it is for which I am to be cursed by bell, book, and candle !

As for your own part, what has passed between you and Miss Arnold, you know best. If matters have been brought to a conclusion, why I have no more to say ; but if, on the contrary, the nymph is in statu quo, and you make all this fuss of self-condemnation about a few silly oaths, and lover's protestations, you are even below pity, and fit for nothing but to scribble miserable ballads, ' shewing how ' a young maiden's ghost came and tore ' out the eyes of her false sweetheart.' Why, thou silly gentleman, dost let a vow stick in thy throat ? What the plague is a vow ? for hang me if I know. I know what it is to swear roundly, in order to make a woman believe that I shall love *her*, and *only* her, as long as I live ; and I have made many a damsel (by way of carrying on the farce) swear as many to me in return ; but it never once entered into my imagination that she expected I should *keep* those oaths, no more than I expected she should keep hers, longer than we liked each

each other. If these be what you call *vows*, I have made and broke as many of them as most private gentlemen in England; but I don't remember that ever even my slumbers were haunted by the injured nymphs.—Ay, but the case is different: *My* nymph is immaculate! Diana herself was but a flirt to her. I make this answer for you, Falkland, because I take it for granted your courage never carried you farther than the back of her white hand. If that be so, then pray what is she the worse for your *vows*? You squandered away a little breath on her, and got nothing but breath in return. Oh, but to break one's promise! one's oaths! Suckling, who ever thought that an oath made to a woman was binding? the creatures themselves don't expect it. Is not the most solemn of all oaths, the matrimonial oath, violated every day? Is the husband thought the worse for infidelities to his wife? and would not the wife be laughed at who complained of them? I am amazed that you, who judge so well in other things, still retain some very false

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notions

notions of honour. I flattered myself that I had taught you pretty well how to distinguish ; but I see how difficult it is totally to erase early wrong impressions.

As for Sir Edward Audley's being the lover of Cecilia (which you mark with a point of admiration as long as the Monument) what is there so very extraordinary in it? Sir Edward Audley is the lover of every pretty woman he sees. 'Tis true, I liked her sister better ; but finding you had stepped into her heart before me, I gave up the thoughts of her ; and supposing your *interest* might fix you where you were, I looked upon Cecilia as a right of commonage, and that I was free to nibble on the borders, without encroaching on any body's ground ; but I'll tell you fairly, I have not now any prospect of success. I say not this, Falkland, to deprecate your threatened vengeance. Had I hopes of winning the fair, I would use thee and thy vengeance for my sport, yea, for my laughter. But the truth is, I want you to join me in a noble enterprize I have conceived, no less than the carrying off, by
force

force or stratagem, those two mischievous beauties; and when we have them in our power, you may take your choice of them; for I am humble enough to be content with which ever of them shall fall to my lot.

This lord V—— is the mignon of the odious Bidulph pair, and all their adherents; and notwithstanding Cecilia likes him not, she may be borne down by persuasions to accept of him. Think of her being lady V——, lost to your hopes for ever! and her poor sister either condemned to virginity, or thrown away upon a fellow who takes her for mere pity. In this case, we must *all* be discontented; Cecilia must be discontented in being married to a man she does not like; my lord V——, who sets up to have what the ladies call delicacy, to be sure must be discontented, without the heart of his wife. There, you see, is one couple miserable. It will be the same with regard to you and Miss Arnold. *You* will sigh for Cecilia in the arms of her sister; and she, poor tender soul, will break her heart, at finding she is not beloved by

her husband; so there is another couple for you unhappy. And for myself, I shall be ready to knock my brains out at my own disappointment. Now in the other way, at least *half* the mischief will be saved. The possession of Cecilia makes *you* as happy as a god. I shall be sufficiently contented, for a mortal, with her sister; and I'll be sacrificed, if both the girls, in time, won't grow very fond of us; or, at worst, if they should be perverse enough to continue indifferent, the indifference would be of the best side; for the poor dears, trammelled as they have always been with the notions of duty, would never once take it into their heads that there were any consolatory wanderings beyond the matrimonial pale.

Thus, I think, I have made it appear as clear as the sun, that no one would suffer materially but lord V——; for which, I fancy, neither you nor I should have very deep regrets. But the glory of our triumph would be in the discomfiture of the Bidulphs; when if, like a brace of towering falcons, we could pounce upon our
prey,

prey, and bear away, like trembling doves, the two young Arnolds in our strong pounces! The very idea lifts me above the clouds! Dost not thou, Falkland, kindle at the thought? Hasten to town then, thou dreamer, and do not sit sighing and moping in the chimney-corner, and raving of what you call the *past*. What is the *past*, but an idle rhodomontade, never to be thought of more? Think of the present, think of what's to come, think of Cecilia, think of your friend, and that one bold stroke makes us both happy.

LETTER XXXI.

Sir GEORGE BIDULPH to Mrs. ARNOLD.

Dear Sister,

London, Dec. 26th.

THE many avocations in which I am perpetually engaged, prevent me from being so punctual a correspondent as I otherwise should be. Indeed I can scarce prevail upon myself to take up
a pen,

a pen, but upon important occasions, such as I consider this on which I am now going to write.

Your daughter Cecilia, I suppose, may have informed you that my lord V—— makes his addressees to her, under my sanction, which I concluded I might venture to give him, without previously consulting you, who, I am sure, cannot possibly have any objection to him. I am very willing to allow a young lady all the indulgence which the levity of youth requires, and all the homage which beauty exacts; but this must not be carried too far, and a man of lord V——'s rank, and unquestionable merit, is not to be treated on the footing of a Sir Edward Audley. I am sorry Cecilia knows so little how to distinguish, and that she has hitherto paid no more regard to the real passion of a worthy as well as very amiable man, than she does to the fluttering pretensions of that very insignificant boy. Sidney, this is not an offer to be trifled with; and the very noble proposals which lord V—— makes, are such as may not fall in our way every day. I should
be

be very unwilling to interpose parental authority on this occasion; but where a giddy girl does not know how to chuse for herself, 'tis the duty of her friends to chuse for her. Cecilia can have no previous engagements; at least her sister knows of none in Oxfordshire, and lady Sarah is certain she could have contracted none at Bath, as she was never from under her own eye; and she professes the utmost indifference for every man with whom she has become acquainted since she came to town. What is it then but vanity, and a love of admiration, that can make her averse to the thoughts of marrying? Lord V—— is past the age of dangling; yet is he so much in love with this mad-cap, that he admires even her faults. I would not here be understood to mean that she has any thing really blameable in her conduct; on the contrary, I think her an admirably good girl, and when she comes to be a little more serious, will make any man happy who has the good fortune to please her.

Lord V—— had thoughts of going to pay you a visit; in which design I prevented him, as I imagine his lordship has a much longer journey to take to Miss Cecilia's heart. I told him, there was no doubt of obtaining your consent, if he could win that of your daughter. I must, therefore, request it of you, Sidney, that you will write to her *strongly* on the subject. I find she has one subterfuge, to which she always flies whenever I urge her on this point. My mama, she cries, would not press me to what I dislike. I am afraid this indulgence of yours may be productive of consequences as disagreeable in their effects as the too ready submission of her mama was upon another occasion.

Lady Sarah is very much yours. Neither of my nieces know of my writing to you; but I am sure they both love and honour you?

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXII.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Sir GEORGE BIDULPH.

Dear Brother, *Woodberry, Dec. 28th.*

YOU did but justice to lord V——'s worth, in supposing I *could* have no objection to him. I *have* none; on the contrary, I should look upon his alliance as an honour both to my daughter and me. I love his excellent mother, and revere the memory of his good father, to whom I had obligations never to be forgotten. I have but little personal knowledge of my lord himself; but know enough of his character to make me wish to see him united to us by the closest ties. It is with equal surprize and concern I hear Cecilia is averse to him. A *reasonable* cause of dislike she cannot have; I therefore am in hopes that time and a little perseverance on my lord's side will overcome her reluctance. I have written to her on the subject in such a manner as, I believe, you will approve. The *authority* of a parent

rent I never will exert ; too dearly have I myself experienced the consequences of such a proceeding ; but as far as remonstrance, advice, and admonition goes, I have not been sparing. I am under a promise to both my children never to urge their acceptance of a man whom they did not like ; but *my* punctilio does not bind *you*. You are therefore at liberty to use every means (absolute force excepted) to prevail on Cecilia to receive as she ought so advantageous an offer. I own I could have wished that Dolly had been lord V—'s choice, as I think her sedate temper would have suited him better ; and I am sure her gentle and complying disposition would have yielded, without repugnance, to the will of her friends ; but as we cannot direct the heart where to make an election, and my lord V—— has already fixed his, we have nothing more in our power than to endeavour, by every warrantable method, to procure for him such a return as he deserves.

I salute

I salute lady Sarah with my best regards,
and am, &c.

[The letter to Miss Cecilia, which
Mrs. Arnold mentions in the above, does
not appear.]

L E T T E R XXXIII.

Mrs. CECILIA B—— to Mrs. ARNOLD.

[The letter to which this is an answer is
omitted, as the substance of it may be
gathered from the following.]

London, Jan. 3d.

I Know not what to do with this nego-
ciation in which you have employed
me, my dear Sidney. I find Cecilia
strangely averse to lord V——, yet I can-
not get from her any satisfactory reasons
for her dislike. Both your daughters were
with me on Monday, by invitation, and I
entered heartily into the subject. Is he
not, said I, (speaking of lord V——) a
very

very handsome man ? (the first consideration, you know, with most girls :) Yes, certainly, the man's not amiss as to person. A very accomplished man ? No doubt of it ; he speaks several living languages, and, for aught I know, may be an excellent scholar, and a rare musician. Extremely well bred, and perfectly good tempered ? The man's civil, and I never saw him angry. The monkey would give her own flippant answers. Of unexceptionable morals ? She turned her eyes at me with so arch a look, that I could scarce refrain from laughing. I know nothing to the contrary, madam. Has not he a fine estate ? I do not want money, Mrs. B—. Of a considerable family, and noble rank ? I desire not titles either. What then *do* you desire, Cecilia ? Only to please myself ; and she shook her little head so, that all the powder and the curls in her hair fell about her face, and I never beheld such a pretty wild figure in my life. Miss Arnold reproved her ; Cecilia, you are too giddy. Dolly, you are too grave, the other replied. I have nothing but my spirits to support

support my courage ; for indeed, my dear Mrs. B——, I am sadly teized by my uncle about this same lord V——. I wish he had staid where he was, or that he had made choice of my sister instead of me ; she is the *very* thing for him. She then flew to my harpsichord, rattled away a tune on it, then turning round, she began a minuet, singing to herself, and danced two or three turns round the room with inimitable spirit and grace. In short, there is no being angry with this girl for any thing ; for 'tis such a bewitching little gipsy, that I believe she could persuade any one to be of her way of thinking. I made two or three more efforts to renew the conversation, but could not get her to be serious. Sir George sent his coach for them at eight o'clock. When she was going away, You think me very wild, said she ; but I have my hours of sadness. For what, my dear ? Oh, you'll know all in time, in a low voice, as she curtsied to take her leave ; and down she flew like a lapwing.

B find

I find I did not know this girl, from what I saw of her in your presence. Restrained, perhaps, a little by that circumstance, she gave not such full scope to her vivacity; yet how charming is that vivacity, when joined to so much innocence and sweetness of temper as she possesses! I do not wonder that she attracts more than Dolly, though (in my eye) she is a more captivating beauty; yet the other is the little ignis fatuus for the men to follow. But now I speak of Dolly, indeed, my dear, I am afraid that poor young creature has some secret malady lurking about her, though she herself is not sensible of it. Her dejection of spirits seems increased, and her looks considerably altered for the worse, since I last saw her at Woodberry. She says, the late hours she is obliged to keep at your brother's, do not at all agree with her. There may be something in this; yet shall I give lady Sarah the same advice that I once before gave you, viz. to consult with some physician about her. Mr. B—— and I are to dine with her to-day, and I will keep this
letter

letter open till my return in the evening. Perhaps I may have something worth adding, as what I have said above is so little satisfactory.

Thursday, Jan. 4th.

I have indeed something to add, my dear, which, I am afraid, will not be very pleasing to you, yet such as it is, you must have it. We dined yesterday (as I told you we intended) at Sir George's. An intolerable crowd there was. Lord V—, Lady Audley and Miss, were part of the company, and seven or eight more with whom I had scarce any acquaintance. After dinner we adjourned to the drawing-room, where the card-tables were placed, for lady Sarah said we were a snug little party. We had not yet sat down to cards, but were still sipping our tea; every one had got into separate parties; Cecilia, armed at all points, sat like a little divinity dealing her shafts about her; a lover on each hand, lord V— on this, Sir Edward Audley (who had dropped in after dinner) on the other; on each of whom
she

she seemed to bestow an equal share of her attention, her good humour, and her wit. Lady Sarah with some other ladies had entered into a dissertation on a new Persian carpet, which had for the first time been that very day spread on the floor. My sovereign lord, who had engaged in a political dispute at dinner, had brought the argument up stairs with him, and was re-tracing it to a little auditory of his own. Miss Arnold and I were sitting together, and Sir George, playing with my fan, was standing before us talking to us both. Such was the disposition of things, which I know you love to have, as it were, brought before your eyes, when a loud rap at the door warned us of the approach of some visitor. Lady Sarah, always present to herself on those *little* occasions, turned her eyes mechanically towards the candles to see how they burnt, then on her two nieces to observe if any thing in their dress required to be adjusted, and lastly on herself for the same purpose. Miss Arnold, who complained of having a cold, was obliged to wear a cap under her chin, which, as it hid
her

her fine profil, made her appear rather to disadvantage. As for Cecilia, I never saw the little huffy look so handsome in my life. The servant who introduced the visitor pronounced the name of Mr. Falkland, and in walked your son Orlando. All the company who were not already standing, rose of course. Lady Sarah just cast her eyes at him, and averted them immediately with a look as one should say, Ah, is it nobody but *you* ! Falkland made his bows with a good grace, though without being well able to distinguish who and who were together, and a little abashed, I believe, at seeing so large a company. He advanced, however, towards lady Sarah, Your servant, Sir, said she, turning immediately (in her forbidding way) to stir the fire, which by the bye did not want stirring. Servant, Mr. Falkland, cried Sir George, bowing low enough ; but raising himself again with that quick and careless motion which a man never uses but to those with whom he is either very free, or whom he considers as his inferiors. The servant had placed a chair for him ; Sit

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down, Mr. Falkland, said Sir George, in an imperative tone, which implied, *Young man, don't keep the company standing.* It was rather coarse in Sir George, it lessened Falkland, and made him appear as if he were not worth the attention of any one present. He seemed to feel it in this light, for he coloured extremely; however, as he is not a stranger to good breeding, he quickly took his place, every one re-assuming their's, except Cecilia, who removing from her two admirers, came and placed herself between her sister and me.

Falkland now discovered several faces that he knew; he addressed himself severally to lady Audley, and her daughter, to me, to the two Miss Arnolds, and, lastly, to Sir Edward Audley. Your two poor girls, who had reddened with joy at the sight of him, had their eyes wistfully fixed upon him from the moment he came in; but not having had an opportunity of speaking till he had paid his compliments round, seemed impatient for him to take notice of them.

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The conversation, which he had interrupted, now appeared to flag altogether, every one seemed as if retired into themselves, and poor Orlando looked embarrassed. Sir George humm'd a tune, When did you come from Oxford, Mr. Falkland? This morning, Sir George. You left my sister well, I hope. Cards, cards, cried lady Sarah; and up bounced the women with that alacrity which girls do at the first scrape of a fiddle for a country-dance. I beckoned Falkland over to me, whilst lady Sarah was adjusting the manœuvre of her tables. He came to me, and standing before me in a bowing posture, each of the girls in the same instant presented him her hand; he took one in each of his, affectionately enquiring after their health. Miss Arnold asked many tender questions about you. Cecilia put forty to him in a breath, and without waiting for an answer to the first, proceeded to another. I found that Falkland, though he seemed not a welcome guest at your brother's, was not an unexpected one; for your daughters, said they thought he would have been in

town as yesterday, you having said to that effect in your last letter.

Lady Sarah always makes her nieces play, and she now summoned them and me to our several parties. The two sisters were partners, lord V— was mine, we were all at the same table. Falkland leaned over the back of my chair: lady Sarah had slightly asked him if he chose to play; but he declined it. I could observe that lord V—, as he sat opposite to him, examined him with a most inquisitive eye; no doubt he remembers his poor father well. I think I have heard you say they were related, but this is not a relationship that will be acknowledged. The suit commenced by the heirs of that unhappy gentleman, made the proofs of this poor youth's illegitimacy too notorious; and I have even heard lady Sarah say, that she thought it would be prudent in the young man not to assume the name of a family who would not own him. You can't imagine, my dear Sidney, how mortified I felt myself on account of his situation. I wish I could stop here, but you had better receive
the

the account of what followed from me, than perhaps an aggravated relation from your brother.

I thought Dolly seemed not at all well. She complained her cold was heavy on her, her colour went and came several times, and I was afraid she would have fainted. The room, she said, was too warm; You had better step out, my dear, said I, the air will relieve you; give Mr. Falkland your cards. She did so, and Falkland took her place. Miss Audley, who was only a looker-on, followed her out of the room. Lady Audley having finished her rubber, now got up; she said she was engaged just to *show* herself at Mrs. L—'s assembly; she summoned her daughter to attend her, and both went away. You must know this Mrs. L— is the great rival of lady Sarah; they contrive to have their nights, as they call them, precisely at the same time, and their great delight is to draw away the company from each other. Three or four more of the ladies were under the same *absolute* necessity with lady Audley,

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and

and lady Sarah had the mortification to see herself deserted by almost all her female visitors; but she had the comfort to reflect that this was not one of *her* nights. The company now seemed broke up, excepting our table, which still held together, and lady Sarah looked very much out of humour. The men began to saunter about the room, as if they did not know what to do with themselves; when my Mr. B—, who dearly loves a game of whist, proposed that they should make a party amongst themselves. Then we will leave you together, said lady Sarah, as soon as Mrs. B— is out. We had done our game presently after, and Mr. B— obliging all the gentlemen to cut in, fortune allotted lord V— to him for a partner; Sir Edward Audley and Mr. Falkland were together, all four at the same table. Lady Sarah whispered Mr. B—, ‘You sup with me to-night.’ With all *my* heart, said Mr. B—; ‘And you, my lord,’ in a whisper to lord V—. Thank your ladyship; but I am engaged, answered lord V—. We then left

left them, lady Sarah, Cecilia, and I, retiring to Miss Arnold's chamber to enquire how she did. I have been minute about trifles; but trifling as these preliminaries are, they led to very serious consequences.

We found Dolly a little feverish, and we made her undress and go into bed. Indeed, Sidney, I am afraid this irregular life will not do with her tender constitution; yet be not alarmed, my dear, she is now much better. I called on her this morning, she was up, and her complaint, she said, quite removed. We sat chatting by her till we were told supper was on table; we went down to the parlour, and found none there but Sir George and Mr. B—, all the other gentlemen were gone. I observed Sir George looked extremely ruffled. I am sorry lord V— could not stay to sup with us, said lady Sarah. I would have asked Sir Edward, but I could not get to speak to him without Mr. Falkland's hearing me, and I did not think it necessary to invite him. I am very glad

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you

you did *not* ask Sir Edward, said Sir George, in a gruffer tone than I ever heard him use to lady Sarah. Lord, why so, Sir George? Because, answered he, he is an impertinent jackanapes, his friend Falkland is no better, and from this time forward my door shall be *shut* against them both. Cecilia, added he, your sister seems very fond of Miss Audley; but to tell you the truth, I don't think either she or her mother very desirable acquaintances, and I should be much better pleased if you dropped them both. Lady Sarah is her own mistress; but, I suppose, I may have influence enough upon you two young ladies to comply with this. Sir Edward is not a *favourite* of your's niece, is he? He asked this with a provokingly ill-natured smile. Not in the least, Sir, answered Cecilia. Bless me, Sir George, I don't understand you! What can be the meaning of all this? cried lady Sarah. Well, well, Sir George, said Mr. B—, let's have done with it; I think Sir Edward was drunk this evening. (By the bye, I myself had

had suspected he was not quite sober.) A pleasant apology, answered your brother. My dear, (to lady Sarah) I'll tell you the affair another time. The presence of the servants prevented lady Sarah from asking any more questions; but she pouted all supper-time, and poor Cecilia look'd frightened out of her wits.

When the cloth was removed, Sir George not re-assuming the subject, and Mr. B— warding it off by other conversation, we took our leave without hearing any farther mention made of it; but the account I had from Mr. B—, is this.

It seems some little inadvertence had been committed by lord V— during their play, which turned the game at a very critical juncture, and Falkland and Sir Edward Audley lost. It was at the very conclusion of their play, the thing was taken no notice of at the time, and lord V— went away directly; but Mr. B—, who loves to fight his battles over again, in talking with some triumph of his victory, Sir Edward told him he might thank

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the

the *dexterity* of his partner for his having won; he said the word *dexterity* with an emphasis which implied something more than mere skill at the game, (of which, to say the truth, lord V— has very little.) Falkland was imprudent enough to join him, and said, lord V— had let a card drop very *opportunistically*. Sir George immediately took fire, and defended his lordship (Mr. B— says) with unnecessary warmth. Sir Edward, jealous, I suppose, of lord V—, said some tart things of him; and Falkland, whether to take part with his friend, or nettled perhaps at lord V—'s having taken no notice of him, declared himself of Sir Edward's opinion. Sir George told them they were a couple of *boys*; and they replied, they were men enough to maintain what they had said. Do you choose, gentlemen, that lord V— should be informed of this? Just as you please, Sir George, was their answer. Mr. B— says he interposed here, not thinking Sir Edward quite sober, and telling your brother he was convinced that lord V— had made an unintentional
7 mistake,

mistake, (which was certainly the case) that the whole ought to be passed by without any farther notice. The young men seemed full of resentment, and Sir George said, Young gentlemen, you had better cool yourselves; upon which they snatched up their hats, and went away without the ceremony of a good-night.

Sir George declared, after they were gone, that though he did not think it worth while to engage lord V— in a quarrel with them; yet he would never let either of them into his house again. Sir Edward, he added, upon the strength of lady Sarah's indulgence, has had the assurance to flirt with my niece; but as I would as soon give her to Satan, (that was his expression) I am very glad of this opportunity of being rid of him..

Whilst I was with Dolly this morning, Miss Audley called to enquire how she did; but she was refused admittance; *both the Miss Arnolds were gone out*, that was the answer she received at the door. The poor girls are mortified to the last degree at this affair, as it not only robs

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them

them of an acquaintance they like, but deprives them of the sight of Falkland too, for he lives at lady Audley's, and all communication is now cut off there.

You cannot think how this little event has disconcerted me; for though I am sure your brother's friendship would be of very little consequence to Falkland, yet one would not wish a young man in his setting out in life should create to himself enemies. You, my Sidney, who have been used to much rougher incidents, will not, I hope, let this affect you. —

LETTER XXXIV.

Miss ARNOLD to Miss AUDLEY.

Pal-mall, Jan. 4th.

I Wanted not this, my dear Sophy, I wanted not this last blow to weigh down my heart already but too much depressed. Your brother has told you, I suppose, what passed last night between him and Sir George; but he little knows how miserable the consequence of his indiscretion

tion has made me. Oh, my dear, I was not abroad when you call'd on me this morning; but my uncle is so full of resentment against Sir Edward, that he insists that my sister and I should break off our acquaintance with your family, more especially as he knows your brother has some designs on Cecilia. How could Mr. Falkland be so thoughtless, why would he be so cruel to me, as to cut off, by his imprudence, the only hope that can sustain my life; that of sometimes seeing him; for might he not easily have guessed the consequence of offending my uncle Bidulph? They are the worst that can be conceived, *he shuts his doors against him for ever.* Dear Miss Audley, tell Falkland, if he has any regard for my happiness, he will endeavour to retrieve his error, (for he certainly committed one) by making the best apology he can to Sir George; else think what I must suffer, nay, what he himself must feel on our being deprived of the sight of each other. 'Tis impossible I can see him any where but either here or at your house; at present both are interdicted

dicted by my uncle, and at the only third place where there might be a possibility of our meeting, I cannot take the liberty of proposing it. This is at Mrs. B—'s; but Mr. B— was himself so much offended at the behaviour of both the gentlemen, that I doubt whether he would permit Mr. Falkland's visits at his house.

I have not closed my eyes the whole night. Cecilia is exceedingly concerned at what has happened; but what is *her* cause of uneasiness to mine? I beseech you, my dear, do not let the part which Mr. Falkland takes in your brother's resentment influence him to refuse the request I have now made. Tell him I conjure him to write to my uncle before it be too late; for it is not with the customs of the world as it is in matters of conscience; and man to man, though not to his Creator, may too late acknowledge himself in a fault.

How my mama would be shocked to hear of this! I hardly know what I am writing. No one that I dare trust with my thoughts, and *you* are taken from me too!!

too! Indeed, Sophy, that is too much, indeed it is very hard.

If Mr. Falkland should write me a line, let the servant who brings it enquire for Hellen; I must be obliged to trust her with receiving, and delivering it to me privately. Lord, to what shifts am I already driven!

LETTER XXXV.

MR. FALKLAND TO MISS ARNOLD.

[This came inclosed in one from Miss Audley, which is omitted.]

Friday evening.

I Am sorry to refuse you, my dear Miss Arnold, the first request you ever made me. Indeed I have so sincere a regard for you, that if I did not think my own honour at stake upon the present occasion, I should certainly comply with your desires. A man should be much more ashamed to defend than to acknowledge an error, and no one would be more candid than myself on such an occasion; but in the

the present case there are no measures to be observed. When I took Sir Edward Audley's part, I thought him in the right; I do so still; and your uncle may (as he gave us to understand he would) inform lord V— when he pleases of our sentiments. As for Sir George Bidulph, 'tis plain he was glad to lay hold on any pretence to rid himself of a man whom he has always treated with unbecoming arrogance. Ask yourself, therefore, if you would wish to see me subjected to any farther insults from him. I think you, who are so extremely delicate yourself, would be sorry to see less so the friend whom you honour with your esteem.

I hope the time will come, when I shall be at liberty to shew you, without his permission, how much I am

Your most devoted, &c.

O. F.

LETTER XXXVI.

Miss ARNOLD to Miss AUDLEY.

[In which she inclosed the above letter
from Mr. Falkland.]

January 5th.

SOPHY, *read* the inclosed letter, and then tell me if you really think it was written by Falkland? *You* sent it to me as from him; 'tis his hand-writing; but good God, what is become of the heart that used to speak to me! Let him refuse my request; let him, if he pleases, prefer his imaginary notions of honour to my substantial happiness; let him even absent himself from my sight; but why, why with such coldness return an answer that has almost chilled me? The *regard*, he has for me—The *esteem* with which I *honour* him! Oh, were it *but* esteem, I should not feel as I do, his indifference. Give him the within letter; I have not reproached him in it, perhaps he was out of temper when he writ to me, and I would not ag-
gravate

gravate his resentment by ill-timed complaints, of what I *hope* is but the effects of a mind, irritated by passion. Yet sure he cannot be angry with *me* ! If my relations behave haughtily towards him, it is not *my* fault. Ah, Sophy, see what it is to give away our affections without being authorised to do so.

[The letter which Miss Arnold writ to Falkland, and which she mentions in the above, does not appear.]

Here follow several letters which passed reciprocally between this gentleman and lady. Those of Miss Arnold are filled with tender complaints of Mr. Falkland's growing indifference. In his, he defends himself from the charge with much art and gallantry, but little shews the lover in any of them. In this place also are some detached sheets of paper, wherein Mrs. Askham herself gives some particulars of the conduct of Mr. Falkland and Sir Edward Audley whilst they were together in London, very little to the credit of either of them, and by which it appears that

that Sir Edward had but too unhappily succeeded in debauching the morals of his companion. All this the editor omits to avoid prolixity, excepting a little narrative extracted from some letters written by Mr. * Main to his sister Askham, which he inserts as it has a material connection with the story.

Mr. Main in his first letter acquaints his sister that a very beautiful young woman, whom he calls Theodora Williams, having lost her parents, (people well born) who left a numerous family of children all unprovided for, was by her relations in the country sent to London, and recommended to Mrs. Main's care, in order to place her either in some genteel family, or to procure for her plain work, as she was very excellent at her needle. That Mrs. Main not having it immediately in her power to fix her agreeably in the former way, had put her in a lodging near her own house, and constantly furnished her

* Mr. Main is mentioned in the former part of these Memoirs. He was brother to Mrs. Askham, and married to the daughter of Mr. Price. He was a linen-draper, and had been settled many years in London,

with

with work. That having employed her to make up some linen for Sir Edward Audley, he had accidentally seen her *at their shop*, Mrs. Main having sent for her to take the linen home whilst Sir Edward, who had just bought it of them, was there. In consequence of this unlucky interview, the young woman in about a fortnight afterwards disappeared from her lodgings, and no one could give any account of her. Mr. Main in this letter, which is long and circumstantial, hints his strong suspicions of Sir Edward Audley's being the person who had decoyed her away, and expresses the utmost regret at this accident, as the girl was the daughter of an old friend of his for whom he had the utmost regard. In his next letter, he informs his sister that after a fruitless search of nine or ten days, he had at length, by accident, discovered the place of her retreat. That passing through a court in Bedford-street one night, he had seen Sir Edward Audley go into a house of no very reputable appearance, and judging that this was the place where the unhappy girl was concealed.

ed, he had resolved, in the warmth of his honest zeal, to go to her next morning, in order, if possible, to prevail with her to go home with him; or in case she refused, (to use his own expressions) to overwhelm her with reproaches.

He, with difficulty, was admitted upstairs to the dining-room, where he found the poor Theodora alone, her eyes red and swollen with tears. It was about nine o'clock in the morning, and Sir Edward Audley, who was then in the house, was not yet up.

The young woman related to him the particulars of her story, which I shall endeavour to compress in as narrow a compass as possible.

Sir Edward Audley, said she, after having called on me two or three times under pretence of hastening me with his linen, at last writ me a passionate love-letter, in which he begg'd I would give him an opportunity of seeing me alone the next evening, not having had it in his power to speak his sentiments to me, as I always had with me a person whom I had taken in to

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help

help me at my work. Convinced that Sir Edward could have no warrantable designs, I shewed his letter to this woman, expressing, at the same time, my indignation at his request; but she only laughed at my fears, telling me I was not the first young person of obscure condition whose fortune had been made by her beauty; that I might, without any danger, hear what the gentleman had to say, and that it would be time enough to reject his proposals if I found them dishonest. Seduced by the arguments of this person, and dazzled by the appearance of Sir Edward Audley, I suffered myself to be prevailed on to grant him the interview he desired, without the presence of a third person. In this visit he explained his designs at full; and after making use of all the persuasions in his power, he concluded with the offer of a handsome settlement. I hope you will believe me, Sir, when I tell you I rejected this offer, with the contempt it deserved; assuring Sir Edward I would give directions to the people with whom I lodged never to admit him into their house again.

He

He retired upon this, bestowing high encomiums on my virtue, and declaring he loved me more than ever.

I received a letter from him the next day, in which he told me, that finding it impossible for him to live without me, he had taken a resolution to marry me; and that, as in consequence of this it was necessary he should have some farther conversation with me, he requested I would once more permit him to see me alone. I will own, Sir, my vanity was not proof against the flattering prospects that now opened before me. I saw him that evening, and he renewed to me the same protestations that he had made in his letter; but telling me it was of the utmost importance to him to conceal (at least during his mother's life) a marriage so disproportionate, I must consent to have it performed with the utmost secrecy, and in a private house, as he would not hazard the having it solemnized in a church. I readily enough agreed to this, desiring only permission to acquaint you and Mrs. Main with my good fortune. But this Sir Edward positively forbid, telling me you would not fail

fail to acquaint his mother with the design, which would be the sure means to overthrow it; and this it was, Sir, which made me guilty of so much ingratitude as to conceal the whole affair from you. I then told Sir Edward, I would desire nothing more than the liberty of having a friend of mine present as a witness. He reproached me with my distrust of him; but asked me in whom it was that I intended to repose this confidence. I named the person he had seen two or three times with me, as the only acquaintance I had in London, your family excepted. He said, people in that low condition were seldom to be trusted; but having asked several particulars relative to her, he at last consented, that she should be present at our marriage.

He then appointed as our place of meeting, this very house; and telling me he should have a clergyman ready at ten o'clock the next morning, desired me to bring my friend with me at that hour; after which he took his leave with all the respect due to a woman he intended to make his wife.

I failed

I failed not to inform my acquaintance the same night with this happy turn in my affairs, requesting she would be in readiness the next morning to go with me to the appointed place, where I thought my good fortune was to be ensured for life.

I had agreed to call on her at her lodgings, and you may be sure, I was punctual to my time ; but I was not a little surprized and mortified to find she was gone out. She had, however, left a note for me with the maid of the house, wherein she told me, that, ‘ having been sent for in a violent hurry by a relation who was dying, she had been obliged to obey the summons ; but as she was certain she should not be detained long, she desired me to proceed on my way, and that she would infallibly meet me by the hour agreed on, at the appointed place, as it lay in her way in returning home.’ It was now ten o’clock ; I made no doubt but she would keep her word, and unsuspecting of any design, I got into a chair, and ordered myself to be carried to this fatal house. Sir Edward Audley met me at the bottom of the stairs, and led me directly up to the

dining-room, where I found a clergyman sitting in his canonical habit. Sir Edward asked me where was my friend? I answered him by putting her note into his hand: I suppose, said he, she will be here presently. Half an hour however passed away without any appearance of her coming; Sir Edward grew uneasy and impatient, telling me if I could have confided in *him*, he would have provided a witness who would have been more punctual. The clergyman now took out his watch, and saying he was under an indispensable necessity of going at eleven o'clock to read prayers at the church which he served, told us if the ceremony was retarded he could not possibly stay. I looked fearfully at Sir Edward, and ventured to ask him if it would not do as well another day? resolving, if he consented to it, to take the opportunity of going away with the clergyman. But he replied with an oath, If it is not done now, Madam, it *never* shall; I cannot bear to be treated with so much distrust. The clergyman then said, that though it was more regular to have a witness, yet as the marriage would be equally good without one,

one, he would make no scruple of joining us, if I would consent to it. Sir Edward said nothing; but walked about the room seemingly very much displeased. What could I do, Sir, in such a situation? I was afraid of losing a good establishment by being over scrupulous; and depending on what the clergyman said, I turned to Sir Edward and told him, if the marriage was lawful, I had no objection. In short, Sir, we were married, and immediately after the ceremony was over, the clergyman slipp'd into the other room, where having staid a few minutes he returned again into the dining-room for his hat, which having hastily taken up, he went away. I observed that he was without his gown, and that even the hat that he took up was that of a layman. I asked Sir Edward the meaning of this: he told me, that to avoid observation he had himself desired him to come in that dress, that he had sent his robes before him, which he had put on for decency sake; but that he had pulled them off in going away for the same reason that he had come without

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them,

them. As this seemed likely enough; it raised no doubts in my mind.

Sir Edward said, that if I approved of those lodgings, he would recommend it to me to stay in them, as he believed I could not find any others more private; but that I must consent to go by a different name from that I had a right to bear, as he himself was not known to the people of the house by his real name. I consented to every thing he proposed; and though I own I did not think these lodgings handsome enough for *his* wife, I thought them full good enough for me. He added, that he would pass as many of his hours with me as he possibly could; but that his mother, with whom he lived, being very old and extremely captious, he was obliged to dedicate much of his time to her.

As Sir Edward likes to lie very long in bed, he had given orders that he should never be disturbed in a morning till he rang his bell. I rose the next morning about eight o'clock, and leaving Sir Edward asleep, came softly into this room.

A maid

A maid who had been hired to wait on me, came up stairs soon after, and said there was a person below who wanted to speak to Mr. Edwards, (the name Sir Edward had assumed.) She said she had informed the man that she dared not to disturb her master; but he told her his business was very urgent, and he must see him. I ventured upon this to go in to tell him, that such a person attended to speak with him. He desired that I would order the maid to send him up, and requested I would withdraw into the dining-room. I did as he directed me. Sir Edward rose immediately, and coming into the room where I was, said his servant had brought him a letter which he must answer directly; he called for pen, ink, and paper, and returned again into his own chamber.

I stepped down stairs in the interval to give some directions to my maid, and came up again in the instant that the man came out of Sir Edward's room, with the letter in his hand which his master had just written. But, Sir, what was my surprise, when in the person of this pretended ser-

M 3

vant,

x vant, I saw the very clergyman who had married me the day before. His dress indeed was different, for though he was not in a livery, he had not on the grave cloaths that the clergy usually wear. He bowed to me as he passed me on the stairs, but did not speak. I was struck at the sight, and could not tell what to make of it. I was certain it was the very man, for I had sat so long in his company that I was sure I could not be mistaken; yet it appeared so unlikely, that I thought it best not to mention it to Sir Edward, for fear of offending him by my suspicions.

I entered the dining-room at the same time that Sir Edward came out from the bed-chamber. He asked me in a sudden manner where I had been? and having told him, he answered, My dear, I should wish for the present you would not let yourself be seen by strangers. I replied, no-body had seen me but his servant. Did he speak to you? said he, (with some confusion in his looks.) I answered, he had not. 'Tis a wonder, said Sir Edward, for he is a forward fellow, and as I have been obliged

obliged to trust him, I concluded he might be disposed to let you see he was in our secrets. He kept his eyes fixed on me while he spoke; I made no reply; and he presently after went out, telling me he had business which he was afraid would detain him the whole day, but that he would be with me early in the evening.

When I found myself alone, I could not get the thoughts of this clergyman out of my head. The more I considered, the more I was convinced that he and Sir Edward's man were one and the same person; but I thought it much more probable that he should have imposed his servant on me for a parson, than that he should disguise the visit of this clergyman to him under colour of his being his servant. Yet what could I do? I had no witness to my marriage, and I thought it in vain to speak of it.

I passed the day very unquietly. About ten o'clock Sir Edward came in, and, to my great astonishment, another young gentleman with him, whom he said he had brought to sup with me. He introduced

M 4

him

him to me by the name of Falkland; but did not introduce me to him, nor call me otherwise than by my christian name all the evening. I was sadly out of countenance and vexed; for I thought Mr. Falkland, though a good-humoured and civil young gentleman, behaved to me with less respect than was due to Sir Edward's wife, if he had believed me to be such. The two gentlemen were in high spirits, and as they seemed inclined to sit to their bottle, I thought it proper to retire, and went into my own room.

I had scarce time to shut the door after me, when I heard Sir Edward ask his companion how he liked me? You may be sure, Sir, I had the curiosity to listen to his answer, and putting my ear close to the door, I heard Mr. Falkland say, 'She is very pretty, and looks very innocent too; I should not take her to be one of that stamp.' What do you mean by *stamp*? said Sir Edward. I'd have you to know she is as modest a girl as any in England. Mr. Falkland laughed; and answered, I suppose you have taken the poor girl in by
the

the old bait, a promise of marriage? Sir Edward made some reply, which I could not hear, and they quickly changed the discourse; but as my curiosity was so roused by what I had already heard, that it took away from me all inclination to sleep, so I could not leave the spot where I stood, in expectation of discovering from their discourse something farther of my own miserable situation; for it was very plain to me that Sir Edward had passed me on this gentleman for his kept mistress. I could learn, however, nothing more, than that Sir Edward and his friend were both very loose men.

I went to bed in great affliction, considering myself, though very innocent in my intention, as living in an unlawful state. Sir Edward observed my melancholy next morning, and with his usual kindness ask'd me the reason of it. I told him that I suspected the man whom I had seen the day before was the very person who had married us. Who, my man David? said Sir Edward, laughing: By my soul, child, he can make as good a marriage as e'er a par-

son in Europe. — I interrupted him, Oh, Sir, if you have had the barbarity to use me thus after all your promises ! He took me up short, and still in merriment, If you *fancy* yourself married, said he, your virtue is as safe as if an archbishop had joined us : all those things are in the imagination ; but don't turn *wife*, my dear Dora, by beginning to grumble. Consider we are in our honey-moon. He then patted me on the cheek, and bidding me good-bye, ran downstairs.

I won't trouble you, Sir, with my sorrowful reflections ; I shall only say that I was now convinced that I was undone ; and had great reason to believe that Sir Edward, as soon as he grew weary of me, would abandon me, and that it was not in my power to redress myself.

In the midst of my uneasiness, my acquaintance, who had so shamefully broke her promise to me, came in to see me. She made some excuses for it not worth repeating. Then looking about her, smiling, Indeed, Miss Williams, said she, I

am

am very glad to see you so well settled. I hope Sir Edward's love may last; but at worst, to be sure, he will take care to provide handsomely for you. I was provoked, and almost confounded to hear her talk in this manner. I have not forgot myself, said I, nor do I want to take the airs of a lady upon me; but I should be glad you would remember that I am Sir Edward Audley's wife. She burst out a laughing, You don't want to persuade me to that sure? said she. Not persuade you! answered I; why, what reason have you to doubt it? Lord, child, said she, I only thought you wanted a handsome excuse for putting yourself into Sir Edward's hands, when you told me he intended to marry you; for do you fancy any gentleman would bring his wife into such a place as *this*? I know nothing of the place, answered I; but 'tis very certain we were married here the day before yesterday. Be it so, said she, (with a sneer, as if she did not credit what I said); I am glad, however, I was out of the scrape. I was so shocked at this woman's behaviour, that I knew not what to say. I told her,

as I found she was determined either not to believe, or *pretend* not to believe me, that her company was far from being agreeable to me. She said, if I was grown so proud since I had changed my lodgings, she knew as well as I how to keep her distance ; and adding, she was sorry that she had given herself the trouble to call on me, she walked down stairs.

I was almost distracted with vexation and shame. I concluded immediately that this vile woman had been tampered with by Sir Edward. I recollected how particularly he had enquired about her when I first mentioned her to him : and as she was in low circumstances, I made no doubt but he had given her money to act in the wicked manner she had done ; knowing very well, to be sure, that though the marriage ceremony had been performed by his own servant, yet (I being ignorant of the cheat) had a witness been present, it would have been lawful ; for I remember to have heard of such a thing happening in my own neighbourhood in the country.

You may judge, Sir, how miserably I spent the rest of the day. I saw not Sir Edward till the next night. He came in about nine o'clock, and was very much fuddled; but as he was in a good humour, I thought I could get the truth out of him. I asked him, smiling, as we sat together, whether it was really his man David who had married us? Why, ay, said he; and I'll answer for it, you never were better married in your life: that's a very clever fellow, let me tell you. I believe it, Sir, said I; but still I am afraid the marriage won't hold. It will hold as long as any other marriage would with *me*, said he; that is as long as I shall like my wife.

He was not in a condition to be talked to seriously at that time, therefore I forbore saying any thing farther on the subject; but when I would have renewed it next morning, he either really had or pretended to have forgotten what had passed the night before. He endeavoured to laugh me out of my apprehensions; but without giving me any assurances that they were ill founded. In short, he told me at last,

last, that he should always expect to pass those hours agreeably ~~that~~ he spent with me, otherwise I must not hope for much of his company. I was afraid to urge him farther; what resource had I? I had thrown myself from under the protection of my only friends, and knew not whither to go. I saw too well that Sir Edward did not consider me as his wife; yet I was sensible I did not deserve a worse name. I have passed every day since in the same unquiet state; Sir Edward turns my scruples into ridicule. I pressed him yesterday, if he really meant me fair, that, in order to make my mind easy, he would consent that we should be married over again, in presence of a witness, even of that servant who I found was already in our secret. He resented the proposal extremely, and told me, I had taken a very wrong way to secure his affections. I cried almost the whole night; for I am determined rather to submit to the lowest station, than to live with him upon those terms.

This, Sir, is my unfortunate story; and though I dreaded of all things to see
either

either you or Mrs. Main, yet I am now rejoiced at our meeting, that you may advise me what to do.

I told the poor creature (proceeds Mr. Main) that I was afraid her case was without remedy; for that if Sir Edward was resolved not to acknowledge her as his wife, I did not see how it was in her power to oblige him to do it; for that having no witness, the man who performed the marriage ceremony would undoubtedly, if he was (as she believed) the servant of Sir Edward, deny the matter as well as his master. I shall, however, said I, speak to him before I leave the house; and after I have heard what he has to say, shall be the better enabled to advise you. She seemed terrified at the thoughts of what might result from my questioning Sir Edward; but I bid her not make herself uneasy, telling her, that in a just cause I was not afraid of any man living.

Sir Edward rose soon after, and entered the dining-room with the utmost carelessness, little expecting to find any one there but the poor deluded girl. He stopped
short,

short, when he saw me, and reddened up to his eyes. Your servant, Mr. Main, said he. Your humble servant, Sir Edward. Have you any business with me, Mr. Main? Sir, I should be glad you would permit me to speak a few words to you. You know where I live, Sir; what is the reason that you come to seek me here? I did not expect to find you here, Sir Edward; my business was with this poor young gentlewoman. But since I *have* met with you—He interrupted me, turning peevishly to the poor girl, who hung down her head, I suppose, madam, said he, 'tis you who have sent for your friend Main? I thought I had warned you sufficiently on that head. Sir Edward, she did not send for me, answered I; but as she was put by her friends under mine and my wife's care, I thought it my duty to search her out—Well, Sir, now you have found her, what then? Sir Edward, you must pardon me for asking you a free question; Is this young woman your wife? for she tells me, she is married to you. Prithee, honest Main, said he, do not ask impertinent questions;

questions ; for you may take it for granted I shall not answer one of them. This lady is my property ; and I don't know that you have any thing to do either with her or me. Sir Edward, I don't pretend to have any thing to do with *you* ; but I think myself accountable for the actions of a young person whose conduct I was desired to watch over. The girl is discontented with her situation. If she be *not* your wife, and is willing to leave you, I think the laws both of God and man will authorize me to take her from infamy. On the other hand, if she *be* married to you, though I must acknowledge, that, as well for yours as your family's sake, I would have prevented it, had it been in my power ; yet as that is now too late, I will give you my oath, if you require it, to keep your secret, provided you will let me see the clergyman who married you, and permit me to get a certificate from him of his having done so. I told you before, said he, that I would answer none of your questions ; and as for your part, madam, since you have been so imprudent as to betray

tray your own interests, I shall give you no farther satisfaction on the subject; only I shall take care to remove you to a place where it will not be in your power to expose either yourself or me. By what authority, Sir Edward, will you remove her? By my own, Sir; she belongs to me. Mrs. Dora, said I, are you Sir Edward's wife? We were married, answered the poor thing, the tears running down her face. You hear what she says, Sir Edward? Why, what the deuce would you *have* her say? answered he. Ay, but, Sir Edward, what do *you* say? Nothing, Sir, I *will* say nothing; but take her from me at your peril! Sir, if she be your wife, you will have the laws on your side; but as she looks upon it only to have been a mock marriage, performed by your own servant, and, in all likelihood, the intended witness suborned to be out of the way, she does not consider you as having any authority to detain her; therefore, if she *is* willing to go with me, I think myself bound to receive and protect her.

He

He seemed confounded at what I said; and I believe the firm manner in which I spoke, convinced him that I was neither to be trifled with nor frightened.

You know very well, answered he, that I am under such restraints with regard to my family, that I cannot do myself public justice in an affair of this kind; otherwise you would not dare to behave thus. But assure yourself, if you attempt, either by contrivance or force, to take this girl from me, I shall treat you as I would a robber, I hope, Sir Edward, said I, you have more honour than to assault an unarmed man, who is under the shelter of your roof; I, therefore, am not, at present, alarmed at your threats. As for what may happen hereafter, I shall only say, that I will always defend myself against violence; but as I do not think myself obliged to fight, you may depend upon it, Sir Edward, I shall have recourse to a legal reparation for any injury you may attempt against me; and I must take the liberty to tell you, that I look upon this young woman as under *my* protection, not *yours*, unless you convince me

me that she is your wife, which, I again repeat to you, that I will keep secret. He swore a great oath, and asked me what reason I had to doubt her being so. Her own account, answered I; she believes herself deceived, and I own I am of the same opinion. She is a fool, and you are another, answered he. Sir Edward, you shall not provoke me by using hard names. Do you insist, madam, (turning to the young woman) upon the proof which I have required of Sir Edward? or are you satisfied to live with him without it? She took courage at seeing me so resolute in her defence. I will not live with him without it, answered she; and if he refuses it, I shall look upon it as disowning me. I should be as unwilling as you, Sir, added she, applying herself to Sir Edward, to draw on you the resentment of your friends; nor have I any desire of being known for your wife, till you shall think proper to acknowledge me; but I will not be passed upon your acquaintance for a kept woman; for such, I am sure, Mr. Falkland thinks me. If we were lawfully married, it cannot hurt
you

you to put me in possession of a proof of it ; and, in that case, I am ready to retire wherever you shall command me, and shall willingly, if you desire it, hide myself from every body but yourself. As for Mr. Main, as I have already told him every circumstance that has passed, he may as well be trusted with the proof of our marriage as myself ; more especially as he has offered you his oath, if you require it, to keep the secret as long as it shall be thought necessary.

The spirit with which the girl made this fair proposal, put Sir Edward with his back to the wall ; he affected an air of indifference, and, swinging himself back and forward in his chair, Upon my soul, madam, I did not think you had been so knowing in the ways of the world. I thought I had got an inexperienced girl ; but I find——She interrupted him briskly, Sir, you have got an honest girl, and, if the expression became me, I would say, a girl of honour——Mighty fine, ma'am ! were you ever play'd any trick before ? or is this your first adventure ? The poor
girl

girl burst into tears. 'Tis unmanly in you, Sir, to add insults to deceit. By Jupiter, said he, I believe the girl has been on the stage! that is so theatrically pretty! But come, Mr. Main, added he, rising, I must desire the favour of you to walk down stairs. I will offer you no violence; only I advise you, as a friend, to go home quietly, and mind your shop; otherwise, without doing you the least injury, I will shew you the way to the street-door.

The poor girl now clung to my arm, and declared she would go with me, as she was determined not to stay another night under the same roof with Sir Edward. He pulled her roughly from me, calling her an ungrateful little fool, who would sacrifice both her duty and her interest to a ridiculous whim. I was about to make him a reply, when we heard some one tap at the dining-room door, and, without waiting to be answered, Mr. Falkland walked into the room. He seemed surprized at seeing me there; but without saying any more than civilly asking me how I did, he desired

desired to speak with Sir Edward in the next room. They both retired. I heard Sir Edward (who, you know, speaks loud and vehemently) swear two or three oaths, and, by an imperfect bit of a sentence that now and then reached our ears, it seemed as if Mr. Falkland had come to warn him of some danger; and I judged it to be that of an impatient and very urgent creditor; for I heard Sir Edward say, I wrote the scoundrel word yesterday of my difficulties, though he is so pressing.

As I wished for nothing more than to bring to a conclusion, with as little noise as possible, the unlucky affair in which I was engaged, I intended waiting till Mr. Falkland should be gone, in order to receive, if it was possible, Sir Edward Audley's final determination with regard to the unfortunate girl; but she, who had her thoughts only bent upon quitting him, took it into her head that this would be a fair opportunity of doing so, as it would save me from any farther indignity, and herself from the terrors of any thing that might ensue, in case he should forcibly oppose

oppose her going away. She proposed making her escape directly, with an eagerness which shewed how much her heart was set upon it. For my part, I thought it the best course we could take; and therefore, without hesitating, I took her under the arm, and, just as she was, without either hood or cloak, I led her softly down stairs, out at the street-door, and, hastening our steps, we were in a minute out of the court. I popped her into a hackney-coach, on the stand in Bedford-street, and, getting in after her, we drove directly to my house; where having told my wife, in few words, her unhappy story, she received her very cordially.

This is the substance of Mr. Main's second letter to Mrs. Askham. And in a third (dated a few days after) he tells her, that his wife and he, not thinking it advisable that the young gentlewoman should continue in London, lest she should fall a second time into the hands of Sir Edward Audley, they had immediately come to a resolution to send her out of town. An opportunity

opportunity just then very luckily offering, A lady, who was their customer, and who used to lodge at their house whenever she came to London, which was but very rarely, had, a few days before, written to Mrs. Main, to request she would look out for a genteel servant for her to wait upon herself. It was to this lady, therefore, they determined to send her; but before she went, they thought it proper that she should write a few lines to Sir Edward Audley; which she did, in the following words, Mrs. Main having dictated them to her.

SIR,

“AS I should be as unwilling to be suspected of infidelity, or even levity, as I should be to be guilty of a breach of duty, I think myself bound to declare, in the most solemn manner, that no other motive has induced me to take the step I have done, but a belief next to conviction that you have deceived me, and that I cannot live with you, without considering myself in a state of infamy. Your conduct to Mr. Main, as it has left me no room to

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doubt

doubt of my misfortune, so it has almost deprived me of hope; for your love, Sir, if you should still have any for me, can never be of any value to me, so long as you think me unworthy of your esteem. I was highly sensible of the honour you did me, in condescending to make me your wife: had you thought me worthy of the title, I should have endeavoured, by my gratitude and humility, to have in time, perhaps, appeared not undeserving of it.

By the time this letter comes to your hands I shall be out of your reach; but if you should ever wish to recal from poverty, grief, and shame, the poor wretch, who but for you would have lived contented in the former, and perhaps had never known the latter, my friend Mr. Main will know where to find me. I shall only beg the favour of you, Sir, to give orders that the few things I left behind me at the lodgings may be sent to that gentleman's house. You will know, without my signing a name, which I dare not assume, from whom this comes."

Though

Though my wife (continues Mr. Main) thought it adviseable to tell Sir Edward that the poor girl would be out of his reach before he should receive her letter, she yet judged it necessary to keep her in town till she should recover her cloaths, as she had nothing in the world but what she had then on her. We sent the letter to lady Audley's house, and the same night all the young woman's cloaths were brought to mine by a porter; but no message from Sir Edward. Concluding from thence that he meant the affair should drop quietly, and seeing no possibility of the unhappy girl's being able to do herself justice, I thought she had no part to take but to retire into the country as soon as possible.

The following day I received a visit from Mr. Falkland. I am come to you, Mr. Main, said he, from Sir Edward Audley, who has received a very extraordinary letter from the young person whom you took the other day from her lodgings. She talks in that letter of a marriage, and accuses Sir Edward of having betrayed her. I will not pretend to justify him for having se-

duced a girl to quit an honest livelihood in order to live with him upon an improper footing ; but I am to assure you from him, that the story of a marriage ceremony having been performed, is all an invention of hers, contrived to save her credit with you and Mrs. Main, after you had discovered where she was.

My wife interrupted Mr. Falkland here, Sir, said she, I should be very unwilling to believe that you are any way privy to Sir Edward's wicked designs; on the contrary, I am inclined to think that he has really imposed on you, as he would now endeavour to do on us ; but pray, Mr. Falkland, let me ask you, if this poor young creature had voluntarily consented to live with Sir Edward as a mistress, what should induce her to quit him so suddenly ? for she complains of no ill treatment from him. So far otherwise, she acknowledges he was very fond of her ; and had she meant nothing more than to have saved her credit with us, she needed only to have told Mr. Main she was married, and that it was necessary to keep the affair secret, Sir

Sir Edward, I dare say, would not have scrupled to have confirmed this, if his bare assertion would have been taken without any farther proof ; and in that case, it would not have been Mr. Main's business to have interposed any farther.

My good Madam, said Mr. Falkland, (whose words you know are as smooth as oil) what you say is very true; and it was the very question I myself put to Sir Edward when he shewed me the young person's letter, and requested I would come to you to explain matters ; but Sir Edward's answer to me was, that in the warmth of his pursuit of this girl, he had made her some promises of marriage. I reproached him for this ; but Sir Edward, you know, is a very gay man, and too much devoted to his pleasures ; he only laughed at me, said he had made the same promises twenty times before, and that she was the first who had ever claimed the performance of them. That it was a thing of course, and meant no more than to give a girl a pretence for yielding to her own inclinations.

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with

with a better grace, and that he thought the person in question had experience enough to know how far men were to be trusted on those occasions.

Mrs. Main lifted up her hands and eyes at this. Mr. Falkland inveighed against the profligacy of the present times, and said he was very sorry his intimate connections with Sir Edward Audley (which it was not in his power to break) had led him to the knowledge of so much of it. He then proceeded to tell us that the girl, in consequence of Sir Edward's foolish protestations, had pressed him earnestly to marry her; that he had endeavoured at first only to evade her instances, and thought in a little time she would have dropt them; but as he now found her an artful creature who had consented to an union with him only from motives of interest, and that she had vanity enough to suppose he would come into any terms rather than part with her, he was determined not to give himself any farther trouble about her: but that she might not reproach

reproach him with having lost her time to no purpose, he had sent her fifty guineas : Which Mr. Falkland at the same time presenting to me in a purse, begg'd I would take the trouble of remitting to her where ever she was, and that the affair might not be mentioned any more, as he was sure it would give lady Audley great uneasiness.

I told Mr. Falkland I desired to be excused from taking a sum of money which I was certain the young gentlewoman herself would reject with scorn. That as I saw she had nothing to expect from Sir Edward's justice, she should not be obliged to his charity.

Mr. Falkland put up the purse again into his pocket, saying he had no more to do in the affair; but added, he hoped our prepossessions in favour of the young person, would not lead us to believe every thing she said to the prejudice of a gentleman, who, though wild and extravagant, was not capable, he was sure, of so base an action as that with which she charged him. He then took his leave, telling us he was

sorry, very sorry on our account for what had happened, and again begged that it might not be mentioned at Woodberry, lest by that means it should come round to lady Audley's ears; for which reason I request, dear sister, that you will keep the whole affair to yourself, as perhaps it might draw on Mr. Falkland some displeasure from his best friend.

We informed poor Theodora of what had passed; her grief is not to be expressed. She declared with the most solemn attestations that could be framed, that she had spoken nothing but the truth; and said she was the more affected at his baseness as she acknowledged she loved him.

There was nothing now to be done but to remove her from the scene of her misfortune, and accordingly we yesterday sent her down to the country to the house of the lady whom she is to serve; where the poor creature may pine away the rest of her life in sorrow, while the base man who has doubly betrayed her triumphs in the success of his wickedness.

LETTER XXXVII.

Mrs. CECILIA B—— to Mrs. ARNOLD.

London, Feb. 1st.

I Am so vexed, my dear Sidney, I hardly know how to collect my thoughts, and still less to arrange my words in such a manner as to convey those thoughts to you, without giving you more pain than, I hope, the occasion demands; but to say the worst at once, matters are in a very disagreeable situation at your brother's.—Sir George, I am afraid, carries the authority with which you have invested him too far. He urges Cecilia without ceasing, to accept of lord V—. Lady Sarah is violent in her instances; my lord himself is extremely assiduous in his courtship. Miss Arnold, influenced by her uncle, tenderly presses her sister to make lord V— happy, and to oblige all her friends. Mr. B— and I, at your's as well as Sir George's request, have joined our

N 5 entreaties,

entreaties, but all to no purpose. Cecilia remains inflexible, and has begg'd her uncle's permission to return to Oxfordshire; which he has refused, unless *you* should absolutely *command* her return, which, to use his own words, 'he supposes you will have a little more prudence than to do.' I own I am at a loss to account for this unconquerable obstinacy in a young creature bred up as your daughter has been. Sidney, I am afraid there is some prepossession in the case, of which you are ignorant. Perhaps Sir Edward Audley,——yet I do not think 'tis he either; she assured Sir George in my presence, with an indifference that carried not the least mark of affectation in it, that she had not for him the smallest attachment. She had two other lovers, both agreeable men, who knows——

I am interrupted; Miss Cecilia Arnold, the servant tells me, is in the drawing-room. She is without her sister; an odd visit enough, my dear, for you must know this is a good Sunday morning on which I am scribbling

scribbling to you, and it is now church-time ; but I am not yet well enough to go out. I go to attend your daughter ; you shall know the result of our conference.

An odd visit I said it was, before I had seen Cecilia ; I now think it much more so. I found her alone, her pretty little face full of embarrassment. She made an apology for coming at so improper an hour ; but said it was the only time which she could command. Lady Sarah, said she, *now* never suffers me to stir abroad without her, except to church ; as her ladyship seldom rises early enough for the morning service. And I omitted attending that duty to-day in order to get the opportunity of speaking to you alone, as I concluded your indisposition still confined you. Indeed, madam, I am made exceedingly uneasy, they drive me to extremes, I am quite miserable, I can't bear it ; and I am come to beseech you, madam, to write to my mama and to beg of her to recall me home. You know my uncle declared he would not suffer me to return without my mama

N. 6.

desired.

desired it ; I am sure she will do any thing that you shall recommend to her. . Do, dear madam, (pressing eagerly my hand) conjure my mama to send for me.

She spoke so rapidly, and with so much earnestness, that I could not interrupt her before ; but now assuming a very grave countenance, You know, Miss Cecilia, said I, that there is nothing I would not do to promote your real interests ; but you will pardon me, if I tell you that I do not think the step you would have me take could in any wise contribute to them ; neither do I imagine that it would be at all becoming in me to interfere in the manner you would have me. I have already taken my party ; Sir George and lady Sarah have both made use of the influence they supposed I had over you, in order to induce you to yield to the desires of all your family. I *have* used my best endeavours, and though they have not succeeded, I cannot think of giving up the interests of all those who have a right to your obedience,

ence, in order to assist you to avoid their importunities.

She seemed abashed at my rebuke, and after a short silence was about to reply, when we were interrupted by the sudden appearance of a very unexpected visitor.

Your son, Falkland, was shewn into the room where we were sitting. Cecilia started at his entrance—I absolutely *stared*, for I was astonished at seeing him. He made his compliments to me with politeness, though with a certain degree of even something more than *ease*, which convinced me he had mixed much with the gay world since his arrival in London. He asked pardon for the liberty he had taken in just stepping in as he passed by, which he acknowledged he had been induced to do from seeing Sir George Bidulph's chariot at the door; and concluding that one or both of the Miss Arnolds were with me, (for he knew that neither lady Sarah nor Sir George made such early visits) he relied on my goodness to forgive his impatience to ask his sisters how they did, as he
was

was denied the means of seeing them any where else ; he added, with an air both of sincerity and respect, that exclusive of any other motive than the pleasure of seeing me, he should long since have done himself that honour, if he had not thought his visit would have been unacceptable to one so much the friend of lord V— and Sir George Bidulph as was Mr. B—. He reddened as he spoke these last words, which shewed me the resentment he still had in his heart against them both. As I knew Mr. B—'s mind on the occasion, I could make no other reply than a civil compliment at large, which was by no means an encouragement to his visits.

Sidney, this boy has an infinity of address, and something so captivating in his manner, that however mal apropos his company appeared at this juncture, I could not help being pleased with it.

Mr. B— was not at home ; and to say the truth, I was not sorry for the interruption, as I did not chuse to be pressed any farther on the subject of Cecilia's visit to me, and I imagined that after the repulse I had.

I had already given her, she would not be fond of renewing the conversation; but I was mistaken, she was too full of it to let it drop so easily. After a few speeches had passed between Falkland and me, he addressed himself to Cecilia, and asked her coldly, *When am I to wish you joy, Madam?* Cecilia answered with quickness, ‘When you see me delivered from persecution, if ever that will be.’ Persecution! repeated Falkland. Yes, replied your daughter, all my friends have combined to make me unhappy; they would force me to marry lord V—. I *never* will. And she pronounced the word *never* with a most decisive energy.

You wrong your friends, my dear, said I, when you accuse them of using force; they have hitherto only endeavoured to persuade, and, I dare say, never mean to carry their authority farther. She shook her head, Ah, Madam, you don’t know what *sort* of persuaders my uncle and aunt are. Their requests are commands, and their persuasions are threats, and I dread even downright violence from their authority.

rity. If I were at home, I am sure I could depend upon the tenderness of the best of mothers. She knows not what I suffer.

She could say no more, and seemed ready to burst into tears.

Why do you not write to your mama, said Falkland, and entreat her permission to return to Woodberry? It was in order to prevail on Mrs. B— to do this for me; answered Cecilia, that I have waited on her to-day. And will you, Madam? cried Falkland, briskly. I answered him pretty much in the same terms I had before done your daughter; then added, And now, Mr. Falkland, let me appeal to your own good sense (all little prejudices apart that you may have conceived against lord V—) is he not in every respect a desirable match for Miss Cecilia, and one to which she cannot have any reasonable objection? I then enumerated all the personal merits, and every other advantage which lord V— possessed, and desired he would give me his opinion freely. I believe every thing you say of him to be true, Madam, was his answer. Ought he then to be rejected,
Mr.

Mr. Falkland? Cecilia's *heart* alone can answer that question, Madam. Cecilia was silent, and seemed as if in expectation of hearing what we should say farther on the subject. I wish, said I, my lord V— had made Miss Arnold his choice instead of her sister. I wish so too, interrupted Falkland. If he had, continued I, I am inclined to think we should have met with less opposition. Cecilia presently caught my words; I wish, said she, my sister were married to lord V—, and then we might *all* be happy. Does Miss Arnold like him? demanded Falkland. No, replied Cecilia; but I believe she likes no one else. These words apparently slipped from her; she blushed extremely after she had spoken them, as if conscious of what they implied. Perhaps, my dear, that is not *your* case, said I; she smiled in endeavouring to turn it off; Dear Mrs. B—, can't a young woman *dislike* one man without *liking* another? Very possibly, Cecilia; but how do you know that Miss Arnold's heart is in such a state of indifference as you say it

it is? She never dropp'd to me the least hint to the contrary. That may be, but *sisters* do not always make confidants of each other. That's *very* true, said she, and seemed collected in herself, and as it were lost in thought for a minute. Falkland, who had remained silent all this while, now asked Cecilia what she purposed to do? saying it was a miserable situation to be daily exposed to the addresses of an unacceptable lover; and at the same time to the importunate sollicitations of perhaps *indelicate* relations. Since Mrs B—, answered Cecilia, does not think it prudent to intercede for me, I will write to my mama myself to implore her protection; if she will receive me, I shall be very happy to remain as I am; if not——She stopp'd herself short. What then, my Cecilia? said Falkland. God knows what will become of me, said she, rising briskly from her chair; but indeed I never will be the wife of lord V—. She then bid me good-morning, and Falkland taking his leave at the same time, he handed her down.

down stairs, when, having put her into her chariot, I observed from my window that he talked with her for some time, leaning on the door of it, after which he kissed her hand, and she drove away.

I am utterly at a loss, my dear Sidney, what advice to give you, because I am really quite bewildered in my conjectures. If Cecilia's heart *be* prepossessed, 'tis a secret that she has guarded with the utmost caution, since even her sister is ignorant of it. But what if it should turn out that the affection which you encouraged between them and Falkland in their childhood, should with regard to this poor young creature have stepped beyond the bounds which your maternal care would have prescribed? My dear, there is nothing improbable in this; yet if it be so, I am certain that Falkland is as much a stranger to it as the rest of the world. The manner in which he asked her the question with relation to her marriage with lord V. convinced me he looked upon that match as on a thing which was likely to take place,

If

If the case stands thus, I should think it would be better never to question Cecilia on the subject. When we extort from another a secret which we should be very unwilling to learn, and which perhaps but for our own importunity we never should have known; it, in my opinion, in some degree binds up our hands, and prevents us from acting, in consequence of this acknowledgement, with that freedom which we should otherwise have a right to do, whilst acting under an apparent ignorance of the person's secret wishes. On the contrary, if your daughter should have courage enough voluntarily to disclose her mind to you, she lays you under no obligation of shewing the least indulgence in favour of a rash and imprudent prepossession; nor ought it to wound either your delicacy or your tenderness to exert yourself in doing your utmost to turn her from it. I have just here thrown out to you my sentiments at large upon the subject, though perhaps I might have spared them, as possibly my surmises (for they are nothing more) may be without foundation.

Upon

Upon the whole, I do not *recommend* it to you to recall your daughter home; yet I cannot help believing that it is more in *your* power than in that of any other person to bend her little wayward heart to that submission which her friends require. By all that I have been able to observe of Cecilia's temper, it is not one that will patiently submit to controul. You, my dear, have never had the opportunity of making any experiments of this kind. You who are meekness itself have always tempered your authority with so much sweetness, that your children, I believe, never once in their lives had the smallest merit in their obedience. Is it not natural then to expect that a young girl full of vivacity, of a high spirit, and not *unconscious* of her own worth, brought up with uncommon indulgence, should revolt against any act of violence done to her inclinations? more especially by those whose authority she cannot hold as sacred as that of a mother's. I am not to inform you that Sir George is rather apt to overdo every thing, and that
he

he would exert as much force to remove a feather, as to lift an anchor. As for poor lady Sarah, as she never had the happy knack of conciliating any one's affections to her, so were she even mistress of a larger stock of prudence than Heaven has favoured her with, she could not expect to have any great influence. Cecilia has extremely good sense, and as much good nature; but she has a *will*, Sidney, a will which must be gently led, and not furiously driven; and I am satisfied she would do more to spare you an hour's uneasiness, than she would to purchase a crown for herself.

I suppose you will receive a pressing letter from her, in order to obtain her recall to Woodberry. I have been minute in laying before you every circumstance that I could gather, and have given my thoughts to you freely upon the whole, that you may be the better able to form your own conclusions. If you judge it proper to send for her, remember you have measures to observe with Sir George Bidulph, and that it will be incumbent on you to convince
him

him by your conduct, that you took this step, in order by your own immediate influence to promote the general wishes of the family, rather than to gratify Cecilia in the indulgence of (I cannot help, my dear, calling it) her perverseness.——

[The letter Miss Cecilia Arnold writ to her mama, begging to be recalled home, is omitted.]

LETTER XXXVIII.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Sir GEORGE BIDULPH.

Woodberry, Feb. 6th.

I Cannot express to you, dear brother, how extremely mortified I am at Cecilia's childish ill-judged obstinacy. I was in hopes my lord V—'s merit, joined to the duty she owes to the will of her parents, would by this time have determined her in his favour; but I find I am disappointed in my expectations, and deceived in the opinion I had too partially entertained of my daughter's discretion. I have
received

received a letter from her in which she has entreated my permission to return into Oxfordshire. I know not whether 'tis with your knowledge she has written it, nor indeed whether it will be prudent in me to yield to a request, which whim rather than judgment seems to dictate. If you don't disapprove of it, however, I should be pleased that she were sent home. Do not imagine, brother, I mean this as an indulgence to her caprice; so far from it, I have no other motive to urge my compliance than a belief that it may be in my power to bow her mind more effectually by such means as I can use when she is with me, than by all the arguments to which I could have recourse by letter, and which I have already vainly applied. There are a thousand little avenues to the heart which are shut up, and almost imperceptible to every one but those who have traced them from infancy. I think Cecilia loves me, and could not bear to be a witness to that uneasiness which she herself caused to so affectionate a mother.

If

If my lord V— is not already tired with the pursuit, my doors shall be always open to receive him, and he may depend on having in me a warm and sincere advocate. A little time may work a favourable change; and Cecilia (who, I am sorry to say, has discovered on this occasion more wilfulness than I thought was in her nature) may perhaps, when less urged, open her eyes voluntarily to her own interest and happiness, as well as that of her friends.

As for my daughter Dolly, I flatter myself her behaviour will continue to be such as will give lady Sarah and you reason to be satisfied with her. I have no pain with regard to that dear child but on account of her health; she complains not; but I have my fears, yet I check them, as I am sure she is in the hands of very tender relations. I hope lady Sarah will continue her friendly care of her so long as it will be convenient to her to retain my daughter in London.

I shall next week (if nothing intervenes which may give me cause to change my

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design)

design) send my chariot for Cecilia. Mrs. Askham is so kind as to promise she will go to town for her, in order to bear her company down. Be so good as to tell my daughter this, as I do not mean to answer her letter. Mean while pray inform her that she has, for the first time in her life, much displeased me by her conduct.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXIX.

Mrs. ASKHAM to Mrs. ARNOLD.

My dearest Madam, *London, Feb. 12th.*

AS you expected that I should set out on my return to Woodberry with Miss Cecilia as on to-morrow, and will no doubt be surprized at my delay, I must beg leave to tell you that I fear I shall be detained in town a few days longer; but I am sure you will excuse me when you know the reason, which is, that my sister Main has just lost her favourite child; and as she expects every hour to lie-in, my

brother

brother has begg'd of me earnestly not to leave her in her present distress. As I could not refuse this request, I hope I shall have your permission to stay with her till the painful minute is over. I believe this account will make you easy with regard to our return; I shall therefore now inform you about your family.

I drove directly to Sir George's on my arrival in town yesterday, and having sent in my name, was asked up stairs to lady Sarah's dressing-room. It was about two o'clock. I found her ladyship at her toilet; Miss Arnold was at work by her, and Sir George was reading a news-paper. He tossed it down when I came in, and I thought looked a little coldly at me; he rose, however, and bowed to me very civilly. My lady, who saw me as she sat opposite the looking-glass, asked me how I did, though without turning her head about; my dear Miss Arnold ran and embraced me. (I know, Madam, you like I should be particular). I suppose, Madam, said Sir George, Mrs. Arnold has sent you for her *prudent* and *obedient* daughter; he laid a

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great

great stress upon those two last words. I am come for Miss Cecilia, Sir, said I, if she has your's and my lady's permission to return. Lady Sarah only said Umph! in her scornful manner, though still without taking her eyes off the glass. I am sorry, said Sir George, that I ever had any thing to do with her, she has vexed me heartily; but it shall be the better for *you*, Dolly. Is Miss at home, Sir? said I. You may suppose, answered lady Sarah, that we should hardly suffer a young lady so willful as she is, to have the liberty of going abroad without some of us with her; for my part I would not take the charge of her, for there is really no knowing—— She stopped there; I was very much concerned, on hearing that Miss Cecilia was in the house, not to find her in company with her sister and the rest of the family, and was afraid they did not admit her into their presence. May I be allowed to see her, Madam? said I; for as I have directions to carry her out of town to-morrow, I believe Miss would like to be apprized of

of it as long before as possible. Oh, answered Sir George, for that matter you may assure yourself she is in readiness; however, if you chuse it, Mrs. Askham, you may go up stairs to her; I fancy you will find her in her own chamber. Be sure now don't be *severe* on the poor child, nor repeat any of the *barsh* things her *mother* says on this occasion. Sir George spoke this in his biting, ironical way; but I would not seem to understand him; and rising up, I believe, Sir, said I, she will find her mama very angry with her; though I shall not take the liberty of saying any thing on the subject. Miss Arnold rose at the same time, with a design, I believe, of shewing me to her sister's chamber; but Sir George stopped her, Where now, Dolly? said he; Mrs. Askham and your sister may have secrets; pray, my dear, don't interrupt them. Miss Arnold sat down again immediately; Upon my life, said Sir George, if you were not the best girl in the world, that little vixen would be enough to spoil you. At the same time

he bid my lady's woman wait on me to Miss Cecilia's chamber.

I found the dear creature by herself, very busy in packing up some of her little nicer things in band-boxes for her expected journey. She sprung to me the moment I entered the room, and throwing her arms round my neck, after having enquired about her mama's health and that of Mr. Price, When are we to go out of town? said she. To-morrow, my dear, answered I, (for as I had not at that time called on my brother, I knew not that I should be delayed). Thank God! thank God! answered she, I hope my mama is not *very* much displeased with me? My dear Madam, you can't suppose she is much satisfied with your behaviour; but I am not commissioned to say any thing on this head from her. I had rather you *were*, answered she, and that my mama had sent me a great scolding by you, for I dread the mild correction of *her* eye more than all my uncle's violence, and lady Sarah's ill-nature. I wish, continued she, poor Dolly were going out of town along with me; for I am
sure

sure she as little likes staying here as I do, only she has not spirit enough to say so. I hope, my dear, said I, you won't put it into her head to desire it, for that would be making an entire breach between your mama and Sir George! By no means, answered she, smiling; he intends to make my sister his heir, if she does not disoblige him as I have done. I would not for the world interpose; but besides, it is not in my power, for do you know that for this week past they won't let my sister converse with me, for fear, as my uncle says, of my perverting her? Bless me, Miss Cecilia, cried I, is it possible that things have gone so far? Oh yes, said she, you see I am grown a sad girl since I left Oxfordshire, and all this because I won't marry a man I don't like! As I resolved not to enter on that topic with her, I replied, But how can you be deprived of your sister's conversation; I thought you had slept together? No, answered she, we always have had separate apartments here as well as at home; but we used, notwithstanding, to have our

O 4 hours

hours for little private chat; but now we never speak but in the presence of my uncle and aunt, which confines our conversation to meal time; for I take as little of their company as I can, and my poor sister is always pinn'd to lady Sarah's sleeve: 'Tis a dreadful life, added she, sighing; do they think to bend my mind to their purpose by such severity? No, no, Mrs. Askham, my heart revolts against such tyranny; yet I am glad they have made use of it, because— Because what, my dear? Because I shall return with double satisfaction to a parent from whose tenderness I have every thing to hope.

I made no reply to Miss Cecilia; but here, will you forgive me, my ever respected and dearest madam, if I take the liberty to say that I am afraid our young lady's reliance on the mildness of your disposition, has encouraged her to stand out so positively against the will of her friends. Perhaps, Madam, if you were a little less indulgent, Miss might be more tractable. She likes not to be controuled; and, I can't help saying, that I believe Sir George has been rather too strict

strict with her. She flies from him to you; possibly if your countenance were to be a little changed towards her, she would fly from you to lord V—, who she knows idolizes her, and who to be sure would be a noble and happy match for her. Excuse me, Madam, for thus hinting my thoughts; but as you have sometimes condescended to ask my opinion, and even to take my advice, I hope you will pardon me.

I did not think it proper to stay any longer with Miss; but telling her I should be ready to attend her the next day, I went down stairs again to know at what hour Sir George should think it convenient for me to call for her. He told me, at what hour I pleased. I said, At eight o'clock in the morning; Sir George replied carelessly, With all my heart. Poor Miss Arnold looked wistfully at me, as if she were desirous that I should not go away so soon; for I had not sat down when I returned again into lady Sarah's room. Sir George observed it; Come, said he, to Miss, I know you long to have a little con-

versation with your old friend: lady Sarah, do you dine at home? You will excuse my observation here, Madam; but I thought Sir George gave this hint to my lady, in order to put her in mind of asking me to dinner, though he would not venture himself to invite a person whom my lady remembered to have been his sister's servant; but I shall always be proud of the title, and so I should be, even if I had not owed to you, Madam, the prosperity I now enjoy. My lady replied, Yes sure, Sir George, we have company you know. Miss Arnold then took courage to say, Mrs. Askham, can you oblige me with your company this afternoon? for I have scarce had time to enquire after my mama, and I should be glad to ask after all our neighbours in the country. I hardly knew what answer to make; for though I wished as much as my dear Miss to see her again, yet I did not know whether my visit would be agreeable to lady Sarah; but before I had time to reply, her ladyship said, Do come if you can, Mrs. Askham, I am sure my niece will be glad to see you. I told

I told Miss Arnold I would wait on her, and took my leave.

Having found my brother's family in the distress I have already mentioned, I thought it still more necessary to go, in order to tell Miss Cecilia that her journey must be deferred for a day or two; accordingly about five o'clock I went to Sir George's; I enquired for Miss Arnold; the servant said she had not yet left the parlour where they dined; but that Miss Cecilia was gone up to her own chamber; and if I pleased he would call her to me. I desired he would do so; and she presently flew down to me. I am sorry, said I, Madam, to see you absent yourself thus from your friends, especially as you are so soon to leave them. I do not like to be brow-beaten, replied she; formerly every thing I said and did was admired; but times are sadly altered with poor Cecilia; besides, I do not like the company they have with them, they are formal old people, and I was glad to slip away. I have received a letter to-day from my

lord V—, added she, all in the same breath, a very decent one it is ; the man seems to have some sense and some delicacy ; I hate him for it, because it will make me appear the more inexcusable. I wish I could like him, but—I am a perverse fool, and there's an end on't. She then gave me the letter to read, telling me at the same time that my lord V— had not been to visit Sir George for two or three days past, which her uncle and aunt laying to her account, had seized her to death on the occasion. After I had read the letter, having told Miss that I could not possibly leave town the next day, (at which she seemed sadly vexed) I informed her I should write to you, to let you know the cause of our delay, and that I should be very glad if she would allow me to inclose to you, my lord's letter. Dear Mrs. Askham, said she, how can you desire such a thing ? I have not shewn it to a mortal but yourself, and would not have my mama see it for the world. I should appear so giddy, so obstinate, so unaccountable ! I am sorry then, Madam, said I, that

that you have shewn it to me, for I shall certainly think it my duty to acquaint your mama with every thing I know concerning you, therefore you may as well let her have the letter, for I shall assuredly give her the contents of it. Well, put it in your pocket then, said she, with some displeasure in her looks, and don't let any one here see it; for we just then heard Miss Arnold at the door, who, having enquired if I was come, ran to receive me. She asked me over and over again after her dear mama, then enquired for all her friends in the country, one by one, and demanded when you had heard from Mr. Falkland, whom she said she had not seen since the night that some little dispute had happened between him and Sir George. Both the ladies expressed themselves much concerned at this affair, and said they hoped it had not given you any ill impression of Mr. Falkland, as you knew Sir George had never been well inclined towards him.

I think poor Miss Arnold does not look very well; she is rather thinner than she
was,

was, and her spirits seem but low, which I attribute chiefly to the thoughts of parting with her sister. I hope, however, Mrs. B—'s fears for her health have less grounds than she apprehends ; for Miss herself says that if she were to return to the country to her former quiet life, she is sure she should be perfectly well. I believe so too, yet as I am certain your recalling her would highly disoblige Sir George, with whom she is a very great favourite, I believe, Madam, you will think it adviseable to let her stay in town at least till the latter end of spring.

I here inclose my lord V—'s letter, which as I thought it would be acceptable, I would not defer the shewing it to you till Miss Cecilia's return, though I am in hopes that will not be retarded above a day or two.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XL.

Lord V.— to Miss CECILIA ARNOLD.

Madam, Grosvenor-square, Feb. 12.

I Do not give the name of an apology to the reasons I am going to offer for having taken the resolution of absenting myself from you. An excuse implies, at least, a *supposed* offence; but where there is an utter indifference on one side, assiduity or inattention on the other, must pass equally unregarded and unobserved, and an apology must consequently appear impertinent. Yet, madam, if in your disengaged moments you should casually bestow a thought on me, I must beseech you not to imagine that I can either resent or blame your coldness towards me, or that I can ever cease to admire and respect you; and while I lament my misfortune in not having been able to gain your affection, I would fain flatter myself that this has not proceeded so much from aversion, as from a sentiment of delicacy. Conscious beauty
and

and worth are ever tenacious of their own privileges, and should not be approached by the ordinary avenues. I ought to have considered that as my happiness depended only on you, I should, at least, have tried to obtain an assurance from yourself, that your heart was not intirely averse to me, before I ventured to expose you to the solicitations of your friends in my favour. I acknowledge my error, madam, and ask your pardon for it; yet it was an error into which I was led by the partiality of Sir George Bidulph and my lady V——, who gave birth to my secret wishes almost as soon as I had conceived them, and flattered me with certainty before I durst flatter myself with hope. But though I have been sufficiently punished for my presumption, I think I owe you a reparation for the trouble I have given you. I am highly bound to Sir George for the zeal with which he has endeavoured to serve me; but as I cannot bear to see you, for whom I would sacrifice my life, made uneasy, I know of no way to rid you of the importunity of your friends on my account, than
that

that of remitting my unacceptable addresses. Yet do not think, madam, I am so temperate a lover as intirely to yield up all pretensions to your favour: if your heart is not already engaged, I will dispute it with any future pretender; but I will owe it to no one but yourself. Sir George Bidulph mentioned to me a design you had of returning into the country: if it be to avoid me, madam, let me conjure you not to deprive your friends of the pleasure they enjoy in your society, nor yourself of any satisfaction you can receive in theirs. My happiness is too immaterial to be put in the balance with yours; and I promise you, whatever it may cost me, that I will not enter Sir George Bidulph's house whilst you continue there, unless I have expressly your permission to do so; and with regard to Sir George himself, as good-breeding must oblige me to excuse this part of my conduct towards him, I shall do it in such a manner as not to leave you open to the slightest reproach. Time and your own generosity, madam, are the only advocates on which I shall henceforth rely; if Mrs.

Arnold

Arnold would be so good as to second their operations, I should not despair of success. I know her character too well to fear your suffering any thing from the rigour of authority; and should my heart impel me to carry my vows down to Oxfordshire, tho' I should still be wretched enough to have them rejected, I should not have the additional grief of seeing you persecuted for what cannot be attributed to you as a fault.

I am, &c.

LETTER XLI.

Mrs. ARNOLD to Lord V——.

My Lord,

Woodberry, Feb. 15.

I Have seen your letter to my daughter; though I must tell you honestly I am not indebted to her candor for this participation. She shewed it but to one single person, who insisted upon communicating the contents to me, and accordingly sent it to me.

I thank

I thank you, my lord, for the frankness as well as the tenderness of your behaviour to a girl, who, I am afraid, is too thoughtless to be sensible of your value. I expect my daughter home every hour, as, at her own earnest request, I sent a friend to London for her four days ago. As you possibly may be ignorant of her motions, I give your lordship this notice, on purpose that you may not unnecessarily absent yourself from my brother, who, I am sure, esteems and honours you sincerely.

With regard to Cecilia, all I can say is, that as she is not ungrateful, I hope that, after a little time and reflection, shall have brought her to a due sense of your merit, her heart will dictate to her a proper acknowledgement of it; in the mean while, you may depend on all my good offices. I will advise as a friend, and admonish as a parent; but, as your lordship observes, I cannot exercise the rigours of authority. Your lordship will always be an acceptable guest to me, let the motive of your visits be what it will; and be assured, I should receive

receive you with a double satisfaction, if I could give myself a nearer title than that of

Your lordship's most obedient, &c.

LETTER XLII.

MISS CECILIA ARNOLD to MISS ARNOLD.

Woodberry, Feb. 20th.

DOLLY, my dear Dolly, do not be angry with your sister for leaving you. Angry, did I say? No, that, I am sure, you cannot be. I never saw your face clouded with a frown since I was born; let me then rather beg of you not to be grieved at my absence. Indeed, my dear, if I could have supported the very uneasy life I led in town, I would, for your sake, have endeavoured to have submitted to it. But you know it was impossible; besieged daily by the importunities of a man whom I could not bring myself to like, at the same time that I was conscious of his worth; urged to a painful degree
by

by the friends I so much respect, and reproached with ingratitude and disobedience, at the time when my heart was filled with acknowledgement and duty! My dear, it is a miserable situation for a girl, who is not a fool, to have nothing but *will* to oppose to *reason*, and that was the situation of your poor sister; for now he is out of my sight, I am ready to allow that my lord V — deserves a much better wife than Cecilia. I would to heaven he had one to-morrow a thousand times richer, handsomer, wiser, better: and now, I think, I am out of his debt; for he never wished me any husband but himself.

Well, but now I must tell you, that though I am rejoiced to find myself at home, I am very far from being as happy as I used to be. My mama, Oh, sister, my mama is intirely in my lord V — 's interests, and condemns me exceedingly; Mr. Price does the same: good old man! I love him, though he chides me from morning to night. Mrs. Askham, who is of the cabinet-council here, has taken up the same tone, and I am tossed like a shuttle-

shuttle-cock from one to t'other ; but then they do not give me such hard blows as my uncle and lady Sarah used to do ; besides I have longer recesses ; for I make frequent escapes into the garden, and tho' the weather is not very inviting, the gravel-path in the wood is always dry.—Ah, Dolly, I would fain tell you something ; but the time is not yet arrived, perhaps it never may—Yet, if I have any skill in the stars, it will not be long before I shall unveil my mystery.

As I hate to be confined in *any* thing, so do I particularly hate to be confined in my writing ; therefore, if you have a mind to give my rambling imagination full play (which, for your own entertainment, you ought to desire) you must allow me to direct to you under cover to Mr. Main, whose scrupulous exactness, I presume, will not object to the conveying a letter privately from one sister to another ; for if my uncle is to inspect all my letters, you will never get any thing more from me than four stiff lines written in my best hand, such as schoolmasters receive once a
year

year from the children they teach to write, in which they beg pardon for past faults, and promise amendment for the time to come.

I have begun by sending this to Main, with a charge to give it into your own hands; and this same post brings a fine flourishing letter of thanks to lady Sarah for all civilities to me. I had as lief have let it alone, but my mama insisted on it; and to say the truth, lady Sarah was kind enough to me at first, and, I believe, would have continued so, if lord V—— had not unluckily thrust in his nose to disturb our union. Do you know that my mama has written to him, and hinted that she would be glad to see him here? 'Tis very true, I assure you; she shewed me a copy of her letter. If he should come down, let them beware of driving me to extremities.— From whom do I inherit this stubborn spirit of mine? I do not remember my papa, but I have often heard he was a mild-tempered man; and for my mother, has she not been a prodigy of suffering patience!

patience! Ah, Dolly, why am not I more like her?—Adieu, dear dear Dolly.

Your own CECILIA.

LETTER XLIII.

Extract of Miss ARNOLD's Answer to the foregoing.

London, Feb. 23.

—— Lady Sarah received your letter in good part, as you know she loves to have civil things said to her; but my uncle called you a little hypocrite.

Lord V—— was here the other day; he told us he had been indisposed for some days past, which prevented our seeing him. He expressed himself much concerned for having been the occasion of driving you from town; blamed himself for having been too precipitate in urging his suit, till a longer proof of his affection had a little better intitled him to solicit your favour. He said he had received a very obliging letter from my mama, which

had given him new life, as she had assured him in it of her warmest concurrence in promoting his wishes; he added, that with this encouragement he purposed renewing his attack in Oxfordshire; but that he would first give Miss Cecilia time to recover herself from the fatigue she had undergone in town from his importunities. My uncle seems much pleased with this step of my mama's; for I believe he was afraid my lord would intirely have given up the pursuit. He said, (speaking of you) after his lordship was gone, That girl is the veriest little tyrant in nature; she has different ways of subjecting every one to her will; she awes lord V—— with her saucy looks, and subdues her mother with her sly caresses. I am the only person who can deal with her. My sister *pretends*, added he, to be angry with her; but we shall see whether she has resolution enough to exert a proper authority on this occasion; for I am determined to be at Woodberry at the same time that my lord V—— is there, or I am sure his journey will be to very little purpose. How I tremble for you, my

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poor

poor Cecilia! Yet indeed, my dear, I think my lord V—— worthy of you, if you were even more amiable than you are. He is an admirable man; he has every thing in his favour; every heart loves him, but that perverse one for which he sighs; but perhaps my Cecilia has not one to bestow on him. Ah, my dear, there is a secret locked up in that little close bosom of yours, that you would fain let out; give it vent, my love; I promise you to keep it inviolably, if you require it of me. If you have given your affections to a deserving object, I pray heaven you may meet with a return: for would it not be a dreadful thing to love without being beloved again? yet still more dreadful to lose the heart you think you have a right to possess! I don't know why these melancholy thoughts have occurred to me; but my spirits are exceedingly depressed. Mr. Falkland, I hear, went out of town to-day. I am glad he is returned to Oxford, and wish he had never seen London. I am afraid he has been too much dissipated here; but he is good, and will recollect

lest himself: tell him I say so. Mr. Main has promised to deliver all your letters carefully to me; therefore do not restrain your pen. —

LETTER XLIV.

Mr. FALKLAND to Sir EDWARD AUDLEY.

Oxford, Feb. 27.

TELL me, Sir Edward, is it the tenure by which man holds his scanty pittance of happiness, to pay with remorse every pleasure that he tastes? What a day of exultation, of rapture, has this been to me! such as thou, in thy wild excesses, couldst never have an idea of. But when I have told you the cause, you must assure me, nay, you must swear to me, that I am honest; for spite of my transports, something knocks at my breast, and whispers, ‘Falkland, thou art a traitor!’ Busy spright, thou liest; dare not to interrupt my joy with thy cursed croaking.

P 2

Having

Having stopped to make a visit on my way hither, I arrived here late last night, and set out this morning, about ten o'clock, to pay my respects at Woodberry. Mrs. Arnold and Mr. Price, I was told at the gate, were gone to assist at the wedding of two of their friends, who lived about a mile off, and were not expected home till evening. Mr. Price, it seems, was to marry them; and Mrs. Arnold, who had bestowed a fortune on the young girl, was to give her away. I enquired for Miss Cecilia, and was answered that she was at home. I entered the doors with a palpitation of heart. She flew down stairs to meet me; my arms involuntarily clasped her. My dearest Cecilia! Dear Orlando, how I rejoice to see you here again! We entered the parlour together. How beautiful she appeared to me! I thought there was a tenderness mixed with pleasure in her looks, that I had never observed before.

After forty inquiries, on her side, relative to the Audley family, and as many on mine with regard to her own, we both,
for



SIDNEY BIDULE

for some time, remained silent, each looking as if they wished the other would speak. At length, How comes it, said she, that you have left London so soon? Because, said I, there was nothing there that had any charms to retain me. Then you have brought back your heart, she replied, with a look that fascinated me.—

Ah, Cecilia, I brought it not thither! This answer escaped me; I knew not what I said; yet my words were accompanied with such an expression of countenance as required not an explanation; a deep vermillion covered her white skin, even to her neck—She was silent for a little while, then assuming an air of sober command, Falkland, said she, tell me *truly*, have you bestowed your affections? An important reason makes it necessary that you answer me with sincerity.

What a temptation was this, Audley, to be a villain! Dazzled as I was with hope, my head was almost giddy. I seized her hand, and pressing it to my lips, Yes, cried I, I *do* love; you have a right to know the secrets of my heart; a heart that was

P 3

your

your *own* before I knew I had one to give ! I am satisfied, said she, restraint and dissimulation are at an end. I wanted but this assurance ; and now I will give my reason why I refuse my lord V——. What a noble frankness was here ! how unlike a *woman* ! no affected confusion, no pretty coyness, after such a declaration ! Amazed, overwhelmed, and penetrated to the soul, I fell at her feet, and grasping her knees with the action of a madman, Oh, Cecilia, cried I, dare I believe my senses ? Is it possible that the poor ill-fated wretch you see before you, the neglected, the despised Falkland, should be the object of my Cecilia's secret love ! Oh, could I have divined what passed in your heart !—— And here, Audley, recollecting myself at once, I was upon the point of declaring— but fear, or love, or falsehood, call it what you will, checked my tongue.—I always thought you loved me, said she ; yet, Falkland, you should have spoke first, and spared me the pain of extorting a confession from you ; had you made it sooner, it might have saved me from the difficulties

culties with which I am now embarrassed. And from what would it have saved *me*? whispered I to myself, and muttering an imprecation on thy head, Audley. Taught from my infancy, replied I, to look upon you as something sacred, I never dared to let a sigh transpire before you. 'Twas that, said she, that modest diffidence, that distrust of your own worth, that won me, and long since determined me in your favour; and if I have till now concealed my sentiments for you from all the world, 'twas from an impulse of pride; or perhaps I should give it a contrary name, and call it humility. I knew not whether a youthful inclination (however lively) without encouragement, without even hope, would not be extinguished by absence, or perhaps turned to another object; but since I find I am still beloved, what reason have I to hide an honest and well-grounded affection? Orlando, added she, collecting her sweet features into a grave and even solemn look, I have as little levity and as much true honour in my soul as any of my sex; but I will not be a slave to false

delicacy, nor sacrifice my own happiness to the vanity of my proud relations. Do you know, pursued she, with her usual quickness, that my uncle and my lord V— are coming down hither? I will throw myself at my mama's feet, you shall do the same; I know she loves you. If we obtain her consent, I shall give myself but little pain about the displeasure of the rest of my family. Trembling with apprehension at what I heard her say, my thoughts were all confusion—'Twas now too late to make the hateful confession—I hung down my head, without being able to answer her. Are you afraid, said she, to acknowledge the truth to my mama? This question suggested a reply. I *am*, said I. Mrs. Arnold will not, I *know* she will not consent to my happiness; and a mother's *prohibition* deprives me, for ever, of my Cecilia. I cannot consent to risque my life (for no less is at stake) upon the fiat of Mrs. Arnold's lips. Her tenderness for you may lead her to forgive a step, when irrecoverably taken, to which she dare not yield her assent before-hand.

Mrs.

Mrs. Arnold lives not to herself, she has ever been a slave to the capricious will of others. True, replied Cecilia; yet I think she *might* be prevailed on. Oh, never; never, said I. Has she not as good as given her promise to lord V——? invited his visits down hither? Your uncle Bidulph comes with him, to arm his sister's heart, by his own example, with severity against her child. I am banished your presence, forbid even to think of you, insulted perhaps by the man against whom, for your sake, I would not lift my arm; you exposed to the reproaches of your family, and probably to new persecutions, and all this without resource.—Ah, my Cecilia, what consolation would it be to a wretched lover to think, that for his sake, his beloved devoted her youth to a single life, and suffered thus for her virtuous constancy? I had seized her hand while I spoke. She snatched it from me, to dash off a tear that started into her eye. If my uncle and my lord V—— come down hither, said she, and my persecution is again renewed,

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renewed,

renewed, Falkland, I am afraid, I am afraid I shall o'erleap the bounds of duty; for force will make me desperate. Call it not desperation, said I, to fly for shelter to the man that worships you. Our hands once joined, who can untie the knot? Let me only conjure you, for the present, to keep your secret with the same caution that you have hitherto done. Our mutual affection once known, the consequence would be an eternal separation. Let us then conceal it, till it will not be in human power to disjoin us. Though I will never submit, replied she, to have a choice forced on me, yet should I be very unwilling to marry without my mama's approbation; against her *express command* I certainly never would. There is but this alternative then, cried I; either to banish me from your thoughts for ever, or *venture* to make me happy, without hazarding an *express command* to the contrary; for such be assured, my Cecilia, you would receive from your mama, who, bigotted to the tyranny of duty, would think herself bound,

bound, on this occasion, to act conformably to the desires of her family, though her own heart, perhaps, would dictate to her much milder measures. Hear my resolution, Falkland, said she, laying her hand on mine. My mother's repose is as dear to me as my own. If I can avoid this match with lord V——, I will wait patiently till the resentment of my friends is a little subsided, when I am determined, at all events, to open my heart to my mama, and I think she will not sacrifice her daughter's peace of mind to an idle prejudice. But if, on the contrary, I am to be *compelled* to marry (for my uncle, I can tell you, is capable of going such lengths) this hand, without farther consideration, is yours.—Think you not, Audley, that I kissed a hundred times that beautiful hand, the pledge of my future felicity?

Would to heaven my lord V—— and Sir George Bidulph would come immediately down to Woodberry, that my little chafed fawn might fly for refuge to

my arms ! She has hitherto kept her own counsel ; I have conjured her to do so still. Her sister is too timid to venture on divulging *her* secret, unless it were to prevent what she will not know till it is too late for prevention ; and then to what purpose disturb a peaceful union by a useless discovery ? Have I then any reason to dread consequences ? I would fain be happy ; yet there is something which will not let me, something that tells me I have done *wrong*. Yet how ? which way ? I have made some slight promises to another, extorted from me in a thoughtless hour of spleen and disappointment. What is therein that ? Would it not be a greater crime to fulfil than to break those promises ? In one case, I bind an unhappy girl for ever to a man that cannot love her, and therefore does not deserve her ; in the other, I cost her a few tears, perhaps, make her fret for a month or so ; she calls me perfidious, dismisses me from her heart, and there's an end on't. Prithee, Audley, is not this the fair way of stating the account ?

I

'Tis

'Tis very late, so I'll e'en to bed, and dream, if I can, of my beloved. —

Friday morning.

I broke off here last night, and threw myself into bed in hopes of enjoying over again in sleep the pleasures of the preceding day; but no such thing; I have had a wretched night, and have now started up again at five o'clock in the morning, and struck a light, for I cannot rest. Oh, may my Cecilia's slumbers be softer! I said I would dream of her, and so I did; but it was some demon, not the god of Love, who presided over my visions.—I know you will laugh at me, yet I am exceedingly shocked, and long for day-light, that I may go out and shake the folly off.

Write to me, Sir Edward, encourage me, rouse me, or, spite of my efforts, I shall droop again before I reach my promised goal of happiness. —

LETTER XLV.

Sir EDWARD AUDLEY TO Mr. FALKLAND.

London, March 1st.

OUT upon thee for a visionary coxcomb! why thou wilt dwindle into a mere old woman at last. Thou art frightened with a dream! the scarecrows of thy own sickly imagination pursue thee in thy sleep, and thou very manfully criest out for help, *rouze me, encourage me!* Oh, thou chicken-hearted Falkland, must thou be spurred on in the road to happiness? Is there not a green sward all the way before thee? not a single impediment but what thy own folly creates! Why, under what a triumphant star wert thou born! Oh, the sweet shepherd of Ida that holds commerce only with divinities! Whilst poor I must be content with grizettes. Well, I envy you not your success with Cecilia; I but fooled with her, for I do really love her sister, and would not have yielded

yielded her to any one but yourself. Things are now in their right channel again; you have secured *your* love, help me to do the same by *mine*, and I will allow thou *art* a man.

I am entirely of your opinion that it would be downright cruelty to keep a poor girl to a silly promise, as she herself declared to my sister that she did not know what she was doing when she made it; and of which, spite of her affection to you, she has a hundred times repented since. Sophy, who you know is much in her confidence, has told me that Miss Arnold had often declared to her she would give the world to recall the hasty step she had taken; Not, added she, but I love Falkland, and would prefer him to all mankind; but then the disobedience of the act! the grief it would be to my mama, the resentment I shall draw on myself from all my family! I cannot bear the thoughts of it. Then would she burst into tears, and wish she had never known you. Why, what a slegmatic love is this, Falkland! How unlike

like the ætherial fire of thy Cecilia! I do verily believe, and I speak to you now without either raillery or prejudice, that after the first shock which her pride might receive at finding herself deserted, she would at the bottom of her heart be glad that she was absolved from a promise which terrifies her every time she thinks of it; and which, you may take it on my word, you would find it almost impracticable to make her fulfil. She would do mighty well to be the mistress of a Don Belianis, or a Sir Launcelet, who could afford to waste seven years in strolling up and down the world, without either meat or drink, in order to prove his constancy; and after that would think himself fully paid, if he were allowed to brush his beard (which he had vowed never to shave till he saw her again) on her lilly white hand through the grated window of some enchanted tower. She would suit to a hair, I say, a fellow who would be content thus to love in buskins; but for us modern gallants, who have not so much time to
throw

throw away on fighting, give me a girl who has spirit enough to spring out of a window into our arms; such a girl as Cecilia, who, above disguise, avows her love, and spite of the stern brow of parental authority, bestows her person and her fortune where she has given her heart. As for Dolly, 'tis such a frigid soul that I am amazed how a spark could be kindled in such an ice-house as her bosom; much puffing and blowing must it have cost the little demon Love to light the flame, and after all 'tis but a sickly blaze, you see, which like a dying lamp pops up and down, whilst Duty waits with his extinguisher in his hand, to flop down on it the first moment he catches the little urchin napping.

Depend upon it, Falkland, this fearful girl would never have courage enough to fulfil her engagement, till after she had made you serve as long an apprenticeship as old father what's-his-name did for his wife. Things indeed were better managed in those days than they are at present,

for

for a man was then at liberty to marry two sisters, which was the case of the aforesaid patriarch ; and if one could do so still, the affair might be made very easy ; for you might take Cecilia now, and I'll engage Dolly would keep cold very well for about fourteen years.

After all, Falkland, I think the best thing you can do, is to make over to me your *imaginary* right (for a real one you have not) in this girl. I'll take her with all my soul, and shall not think the worse of her, for her having formerly liked a handsomer fellow than myself. I'll trust to her religion to keep her faithful to me, once I am vested with the awful name of husband. By the way, those prejudices are not without their use amongst the women, they often keep the poor things out of mischief when nothing else would. Give it me therefore in black and white (that we may have no after reckonings) that you yield up all pretensions to Dorathea Arnold, and I'll take her off your hands.

Sir

Sir George Bidulph goes down to Woodberry.—Good! matters must then be soon brought to a crisis. His peevish wife is not so vigilant as himself; and if I knew the day, the hour, the minute that united you to Cecilia; on that same day, hour, and minute, would I possess myself of the elder hope of the family. I have conceived my plan; but 'tis your hand, Falkland, must help me to execute it; and when our uncle Bidulph has turned his back, you shall hear from me to some purpose.

LETTER XLVI.

MR. FALKLAND TO SIR EDWARD AUDLEY.

Oxford, March 4th.

MY good genius is at work for me, blessings on lord V— for taking the resolution of coming down to Woodberry! He arrived there yesterday; little did the fool imagine that he was coming
on

on the spur to the destruction of his own hopes. What a *gracious* reception did he meet with from Mrs. Arnold ! What a delightfully cold one from my adorable ! Things are, I hope, as you say, drawing to a crisis ; but this lord V— is too temperate, and the elements too equally mixed in his composition ; his breath alone is not sufficient to raise the storm that is to drive my Cecilia from the harbour of her mother's arms ; his sighs like gentle breezes do but lift, and give a livelier motion to the waves. 'Tis Sir George Bidulph, who like the boisterous north wind, will blow a storm, work all into foam about him, and force my little pinnace from her moorings. Would he were come ! But what can his absence from London do for you ? Do you think it will make your access to Miss Arnold less difficult ? Be assured, Audley, I do most sincerely wish her your's, and do hereby renounce all right and title to her. I am certain that you would make her a much better husband than I should, and therefore shall be ready
to

to concur with you in any measures to obtain her; but to tell you the truth, the thing appears so impracticable to me, that till I know your plan, I must consider your hopes as almost desperate, and cannot help being sorry for you in the midst of the tide of joy that flows in upon my heart.

As for my own part, I begin to be quite reconciled to myself; and if my solitary hours are sometimes clouded with a little remorse, the rays of my Cecilia's eyes dispel it as sun-shine does a vapour.

End of the FOURTH VOLUME.

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